

I don't want to share my story today.

But I need to do everything I can to compel you- in fact, to beg you- to change this law.

Because people need agency over their own lives...  
including who they marry, and whether they STAY married.  
It is a basic human right.

My husband has never contributed financially to the household. He lives in the basement of the house, barely speaks to me, and barely parents the children.

I've been through several long, difficult rounds of marriage counselling, plus my own, separate mental health counselling to try to deal with this.

And, after years of that, in 2019 I made the gut-wrenching decision that I needed to end the marriage.

My husband refused to even discuss divorce.

So I consulted a lawyer. And I cried through the whole meeting—at \$360 an hour.  
Because she advised me to take the kids and flee. If my husband wouldn't leave the house, I needed to 'establish separation', so I would have 'grounds for divorce'.

And the only way to do that was to leave the home.

- The home that *I alone* paid the mortgage on
- The house that, when it needed a new roof, *I* got three estimates, *I* hired the contractor, *I* financed the work, and *I* paid it off over the next three years.
- The only home my children had ever known

I was to keep paying for that house—and find and fund a second residence for me and the kids. Which would also mean I'd given up 'use and possession' of the home, meaning I'd be unlikely to ever get back into it.

So, this was not really a choice. Not for a mother who has any regard for the emotional and financial wellbeing of her children or herself.

I thought:

- This CAN'T be right. I'm misunderstanding. There is a communication issue with my lawyer. There is a lot of emotion here. This can't be right.

So I hired a second lawyer,  
and a third lawyer-  
they told me the same thing.

It was surreal. It was that nightmare of running from person to person, desperate for an escape... and no one can help you.

Since 2019, I've been held hostage in a marriage that I no longer consent to. And I've spent \$10,000 in legal fees.

I can't possibly... describe... the level of stress, the loneliness, the isolation.

The institutionalized gas lighting of having the State say:

- if your husband hit you, or cheated on you... we recognize those the kinds of pain.
- But YOUR kind of pain? We refuse to recognize that. It does not count. You have to stay.
- Unless your husband grants you a divorce.

This isn't medieval Europe.

Or Syria. This isn't even Idaho.

There are people who desperately need to be emancipated from their marriages.

Thank you.