

Dear State Representatives, and all voices for children.

The Department of Children and families has been broken for many years. In order to keep children safe, healthy, educated and to receive the medical care that they need there, needs to be systems in place state wide that here the voices of the children.

It became clear to me when I became a foster parent in 2013, that depending on which county you live in here in Vermont, there are different rules, different people,,different policies in place per department. Children are not receiving the same oversight of their case, they are not receiving the same services that are offered to another child with the same needs in a different county. Foster parents in some counties were receiving and overwhelmingly amount of support for the care of the children in their homes yet many families in other counties were receiving no support after children were placed in their home. Not even a phone call to them to see how the child was or if they had adjusted ok. I believe that creating a system where policies and procedures are required to be followed in every county equally and interpreted equally, and that there is a position in place overseeing that these are being followed in every county so that every child every family every social worker receives the support systems they need to maintain a safe and healthy environment for the children were serving. I have watched case workers resign, have mental break downs, and some leave the field in its entirety due to overwhelming sense of doom in watching what the system and people in the positions currently held are putting the children through based on what they believe they have to do to follow the rules of the courts and regulations of policies. I also believe that children being in foster care for 15 out of 22 months in order for a permanency hearing to be put in place is too much. There are families that have basically said that they don't want their children to come home yet we force these children and these families to continue with visits in hopes that we can reunify them. Under what condition? Under what safe environment are we trying to unify? Babies are placed in foster homes at one day of age and try to reunify with parents at 15 months old when the only family they've ever known is the foster family. The biological family has had visits a few days a week for an hour, how did they get to know their children and how do we know that they are able to provide with these children need on an every day basis late at night and when the child is sick or when multiple children are all crying at the same time. Currently we are depending on "family time coaches" to tell us that these families can handle their children. That there are no red flags with their parenting skills and that they are safe with them. Did it ever dawn on anyone that some parents are so street smart that they know their children are their meal ticket. That they cannot have housing. Food. Transportation. Medical insurance without their children so they have to keep it together while they are with you and paint this perfect parent picture. Foster parents talk to bio parents more than the case workers. Yet their information when reported to the

caseworker is dismissed as hear say. Why? Because this would mean that the case worker was wrong?. How do we know that we are supporting positive reunification. I believe that having this new system in place with a set of eyes to review all the documentation, where we can make sure that children are receiving or have received and families are receiving or have received all of the support training and education they need to give their children a positive life moving forward. Or to move this to a TPR where the children are able to bond with a permanent home and permanent people in their lives. It is important for the state of Vermont to set a precedent to show that we care about these children. That we will be a voice for the children. The opioid crisis in Vermont is extremely high this has put many children into the foster care system. Our social workers are spending numerous hours making sure that the parents have gone to their appointments had their drug test done, have gone to parenting classes are meeting with family time coaches making sure that they're seeing their children at their visits are supervised. At what point and for how long do we continue to keep these children in lives in limbo? We have to stop this. Put a system in place that works for the child. That's puts a stop to the chaos and forces the hand of DCF to stop allowing the bio parents to continue the trauma they have induced on their children. Please be their voice. Thank you.