

Testimony of Meghann Miller

Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight

June 30, 2026

Room 582-N, Kansas Statehouse

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Joint Committee on Child Welfare System Oversight, thank you for allowing me to testify.

My name is Meghann Miller. I am a mother of five from Gardner, Kansas. I am also the founder of Stand With Meg and the Family Rights Registry.

Some of you know my face by now.

On November 14, 2024, I came to you after 290 days without seeing my children.

On March 28, 2025, I came back and told you DCF later confirmed the allegations against me were unsubstantiated.

In October 2025, I came back again and told you I was living in what I call Temporary Land, where delay and money become weapons.

On March 30, 2026, I came with Kansas data from families across this state.

And here I am again.

Same mother.

Same case.

And today, on June 30, 2026, it has been 883 days since January 29, 2024, when I lost access to my five children through an emergency process in Johnson County.

No full custody trial first.

No real chance to test the allegations before my children were taken from me.

And still no meaningful access restored.

To this day, I have never had a custody trial.

To this day, I do not have my children back.

That order was signed by Judge Keven O'Grady on a motion filed by my children's Guardian ad Litem, Randy McCalla, built around a therapy report I was never allowed to read before my children were taken.

No witnesses were sworn. No testimony was taken. I was in the room, and I was not allowed to be a mother in it.

Judge O'Grady's name is now also in the Kansas Family Court Data Report because multiple Kansas families have independently named him in the registry. I am not asking this committee to treat every family report as a court finding. I am asking you to stop ignoring what happens when the same names, the same roles, and the same patterns keep showing up from different families.

Today you are spending most of the day discussing foster-care cases behind closed doors: KVC, Saint Francis, Cornerstones of Care, TFI, and EmberHope. Later you will hear from DCF Secretary Laura Howard, Child Advocate Kerrie Lonard, and Kristalle Hedrick from Children's Alliance of Kansas.

I respect that those systems have official voices.

But children and parents need official attention too.

The families do not get a closed door.

The families do not get a contract.

The families do not get a budget line.

They get a survey, and a microphone for a few minutes, if they can afford to be here at all.

Because families are telling you that these systems do not operate in separate boxes. Family court, CPS, foster care, GALs, therapists, providers, judges, and private fees all collide in the same child's life.

That is what my Kansas report shows.

I am attaching the Kansas Family Court Data Report to this testimony. I am also attaching the DCF investigations audit proposal, because it confirms that this committee already has reason to be looking at how DCF tracks, investigates, and communicates abuse and neglect allegations between parents.

This report now includes 238 Kansas families. That is 435 children. Fifty-eight of our 105 Kansas counties. These are families who found the survey, trusted it enough to submit, and told us what happened to them.

Across those Kansas families, the median time lost with children is 16 months.

The total reported lost parenting time is 4,953 months.

That is 412.8 years of parent-child time.

You cannot give that back.

You cannot create a grant program that gives a child back the missing birthdays, the missing holidays, the missing bedtime routines, the missing first days of school, or the years they were told one parent was too dangerous to love.

Nearly half of the families who answered the custody section reported either no contact or visitation only. Sixty-five Kansas families reported no contact or total loss of access.

One hundred twenty-four Kansas parents reported they went pro se. One hundred four reported they ran out of money.

The median family burden is \$96,100.

Kansas families reported more than \$7.6 million in attorney fees, more than \$4.8 million in lost wages, more than \$921,000 in GAL fees, and more than \$305,000 in reunification services.

That is not just litigation.

That is pay-to-parent.

That is a system where families are told: pay the attorney, pay the GAL, pay the therapist, pay the supervisor, pay the evaluator, pay again, wait again, and maybe one day someone will let you be a parent.

I know that system personally.

In my case, I lost custody of all five of my children on January 29, 2024. I did not receive a full evidentiary custody trial before that happened. I was not meaningfully questioned before the allegations were treated as fact. DCF later marked the allegations unsubstantiated, yet my children were not returned to me.

I have had court-ordered therapy. I have had paid reunification. I have had provider barriers. I have had hearings delayed. I have had a four-day custody trial tied to GAL fees I could not pay. I have been told to find supervisors with requirements so unrealistic that access becomes impossible.

I have spent the time since then trying to unlock my own children from behind one gate after another: pay this fee, find that supervisor, satisfy a private provider, wait for another hearing, and prove again that I deserve to be their mother.

And I am still here, 883 days later, asking for the most basic thing: a real hearing, a real record, and real access to my children.

But this is not only my story.

One Kansas parent wrote: "My children were denied their due process rights."

Another wrote: "I followed every rule, met every demand, jumped through every hoop they placed in front of me, but all they did was move the finish line."

Another wrote: "We weren't convicted by evidence, we were processed by indifference."

And another wrote: "I never imagined a system meant to protect children could separate them from the only home and parent they had known for over a decade."

Another Kansas parent, writing about Judge O'Grady, reported an order removing five children without a full hearing, without witnesses, and without a real hearing after more than two years of separation.

That is not my quote. That is another Kansas parent describing the same kind of machinery before they ever knew my case.

When the same story comes back to you over and over, from families who have never met, that is not a coincidence.

Those are not policy talking points.

Those are parents describing what it feels like when the process becomes the punishment.

And this is where DCF must be part of the conversation.

The DCF investigations proposal says the Kansas Protection Report Center received more than 51,500 reports of abuse and neglect in fiscal year 2025.

Almost 97% were unsubstantiated.

Only 3% were substantiated.

That should stop this room cold.

Because families are telling you what happens next: an allegation can be unsubstantiated by DCF and still be used in family court like it is true. A child can report abuse, and families report that the concern is filtered, minimized, mislabeled, delayed, or never communicated to the right place in a way that protects the child. Then the protective parent is treated like the problem. The child is left in the middle. The court record becomes distorted. And nobody is accountable for the damage.

That is not a paperwork issue.

That is a child-safety issue.

That is a due-process issue.

And when family court and DCF fail to communicate the truth clearly, children pay for it.

This is not just a warning.

It is a pattern.

It is an epidemic.

Families across Kansas are reporting the same things: emergency removals without tested evidence, false accusations, years of delay, paid gatekeeping, children whose abuse disclosures are not handled correctly, DCF findings that do not fix the family-court damage, pro se parents who ran out of money, children moved through family court and CPS at the same time, and no meaningful way to get accountability when the damage is done.

So today, when this committee hears from DCF, OCA, providers, and organizations, I am asking you to ask harder questions.

Ask how many children are separated from a parent without a prompt evidentiary hearing.

Ask how often unsubstantiated allegations continue to shape custody restrictions after DCF closes a matter.

Ask how many families are forced pro se because the system drained them first.

Ask how many parents are denied contact because they cannot afford private supervisors, GAL fees, reunification therapy, or court-connected providers.

Ask who audits judges, GALs, court-involved therapists, case managers, and custody-connected providers when families report harm.

Ask why a parent can lose everything through an emergency order, but then wait months or years for a real hearing.

Ask why DCF can close an allegation as unsubstantiated, but the family court can keep punishing the parent as if the allegation were proven.

Ask why a child can speak about abuse and the system can still fail to document it, communicate it, investigate it, or act on it correctly.

Because if the answer is "that is just family court," then Kansas has normalized a civil-rights crisis inside the lives of children.

I am asking for four things.

First, require prompt post-deprivation hearings after emergency custody removals, with sworn evidence, written findings, and a real chance to respond.

Second, require prompt disclosure of exculpatory DCF findings to the court and all parties when allegations are unsubstantiated.

Third, prohibit courts from conditioning parent-child contact or trials on fees a parent cannot pay without an ability-to-pay process and a clear alternative path. A trial is not a luxury good. Reunification is not a subscription.

Fourth, create independent oversight for the court-connected actors families keep reporting: judges, GALs, therapists, supervisors, case managers, and providers whose recommendations can decide whether a child sees a parent.

Fifth, require body-camera or chest-camera recording for every adult who interviews, questions, transports, supervises, evaluates, or speaks with a child in these cases, including therapists, GALs, case managers, DCF workers, law enforcement, and judges. If police are required to record public encounters for accountability, then the adults whose words can separate a child from a parent should be recorded too. I have seen therapists, judges, and court-connected adults claim a child said something, while the parent has no recording, no transcript, and no way to prove what was actually said. Children deserve a record. Parents deserve a record. The truth deserves a record.

I am here because I was erased as a mother, and then I found hundreds of Kansas families describing the same kind of erasure in their own words.

My children still do not have the trial they deserved before their mother was taken from their everyday life.

I still do not have meaningful access.

And Kansas families are still submitting reports saying the same thing:

They were not protected by process.

They were processed by power.

Please do not let this committee become another place where families are allowed to speak, documented, thanked, and then ignored.

You have my story.

You have 238 Kansas families' stories.

You have the data.

Read the report.

Read the parent comments.

Ask the named systems and agencies what they are doing with families like mine.

And then act.

Thank you.

Meghann Miller

StandWithMeg.com