

HB 1533 - Protecting Domestic Violence Victims from Abusive Litigation

Written Testimony of Amanda Anderson

February 6, 2023

To Rep. Boschee, Rep. Klemin, Rep. Pyle, Rep. Roer-Jones, Rep. Schneider, Sen. Braunberger, Rep. Hanson, Rep. Ista, and the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Amanda Anderson and I am a resident of Fargo, ND. I am writing this in support of HB1533, protecting domestic violence victims from abusive litigation.

This bill is an important piece of legislation that aims to protect those who have been through domestic violence and finding a way out. Abusers have the ability to continue their abuse through the court system, the very system that is meant to protect. It is not only a continuation of emotional and mental abuse, but it is an enormous financial burden as well.

My personal experience has been difficult. While going through my divorce, I obtained a disorderly conduct restraining order. Due to safety concerns, we used a safe exchange facility. We utilized a parenting coordinator as a means to keep us out of court; however, he was able to continue to fight me in court for every little thing he wanted—additional parenting time, custody, money, literally anything he wanted—baseless things that shouldn't have been warranted in a courtroom. Our case filing is extremely extensive. I've been divorced for over a decade but am STILL being brought back to court—next month in fact.

When it was early on in my divorce, every time I would get court paperwork, it was like emotional and mental abuse all over again. It was hard for me to be a good parent. It was difficult to continuously be brought back to defend myself for no reason. It was extremely expensive. With the amount of money I've spent defending myself, I could have easily put one of my children through college. All for no reason except that it was a legal way for an abuser to continue to reach a victim. A way to control.

While doing my exchanges at Rainbow Bridge, I met others like me. Others who were in my situation, with no where to turn for help. Parents spending every penny they have to defend themselves, just trying to be the best parents they could be while dealing internally with the emotional turmoil, trying to keep themselves and their children safe. It has made relationships hard. It's taken time away from work, my children, family and friends. This bill is important, it's necessary. Courts need to be allowed to handle important matters, not give abusers the ability to legally terrorize their victims.

I would appreciate your support in passing this bill.