

Testimony in Support of Rebuttable Shared Parenting
Steve Wolt

Chairperson and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Steve Wolt, and I am here today to urge you to support Rebuttable Shared Parenting. I went through a divorce in North Dakota years ago, and while my children are now grown, the devastating consequences of our state's custody laws continue to affect them to this day.

During my divorce, the "14 Best Interest Factors" were used to justify limiting my time with my children. The vague and subjective nature of these factors allowed false accusations and legal maneuvering to dictate the outcome, rather than the fundamental truth that children thrive when they have both parents actively involved in their lives. Instead of fostering stability, the system effectively severed half of my children's support structure during the most critical years of their development.

The effects of this loss have been profound. My children grew up without the full support, love, and guidance that both parents should provide. Even now, as adults, they continue to struggle with the long-term emotional and psychological impacts of a childhood shaped by unnecessary separation. The state's current approach to custody has not only harmed me as a parent—it has harmed my children, the very people the law is supposed to protect.

This is why Rebuttable Shared Parenting is so critical. It ensures that both parents have equal standing in their children's lives unless proven otherwise. It shifts the burden away from a system that too often enables false accusations and parental alienation, and instead prioritizes what truly benefits children: the presence of both loving parents.

Shared parenting is not about favoring one parent over the other—it is about ensuring that children are not forced to grow up missing half of their family support. Every child deserves the love and involvement of both parents, and every fit parent deserves the opportunity to provide that love.

I urge this committee to pass Rebuttable Shared Parenting and take a stand for the children of North Dakota. Let us move toward a system that truly protects their best interests by ensuring they do not lose one parent due to outdated, harmful legal practices. Our children deserve better.

Signed,
Steve Wolt