

Date: March 9, 2025

What: SB 2186 Three Strikes

Who: Dorothy Kuester

Retired Early Childhood Educator

Williston School District: 38 years of experience

Nana to three precious grandsons

Attention Chairman and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

I am here today to testify in favor of SB 2186 (Three Strikes)

In the summer of 2023, my daughter-in-law stole my three grandsons. They were gone for eight days. She convinced my son that she would return home with the children if he moved out of the house. They would temporarily be separated, and she would allow him visitation while they worked on their marriage. Our son complied and moved out of the family home. When she returned, she changed the locks, bolted the gates and installed video cameras.

From August to late December of 2023, our son had very little contact with his children. She did allow him visitation on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 5:00. Without my son's knowledge, she filed approximately 27 combined Police reports, CPS reports, Dr. and ER reports that my son was physically and sexually abusing his sons. She would call the police to the home on Sunday after the children had returned from visiting their father. She would report many types of abuse. She would state that the children were returned to her with evidence of abuse that was not there while they were in her care. The police would write up a report and then she would follow up the claim to CPS on Monday morning.

My grandchildren have been interviewed by police, counselors, doctors and social workers at the tender ages of 5 and 3. They have been asked to show private areas of their bodies to professional individuals they should trust and respect. They have been traumatized by these accounts and are afraid and concerned when they discover a tiny scratch or bruise on their body.

My daughter-in-law knew just how to do this. Even though she was a stay-at-home mom, she holds a license to practice Social Work in the state of North Dakota. She had worked for Williams County Social Services in Williston before the three children were born.

On December 22, 2023, my son was called to a CPS meeting in Williston. He was informed of the CPS file and was told that the case was closed. All of his wife's allegations were unconfirmed. The social worker stated in the report that my daughter-in-law did not perceive reality accurately.

The very next day, my daughter-in-law and her parents loaded up a trailer with furniture from the family home and fled the state. They crossed the state line into Montana and relocated 150 miles from Williston. My son quickly confirmed where they were and filed Contempt of Court and served her with Divorce papers. She made no attempt to return to Williston.

The Interim Hearing was held in Williston on Feb. 2, 2024. On this day, she returned to Williston. It had been 48 days since my son had seen his boys. At the hearing the Judge did nothing about the Contempt of Court. The Judge had the complete unredacted CPS file in his possession. The file that found all the allegations unconfirmed. Four weeks later my son received the Judge's determination His wife would be allowed to stay in Montana 150 miles from the family home in ND. My son would have visitation every other weekend and certain holidays and birthdays. The Judge did nothing about the Contempt of Court or CPS file. This order remained in place for eight months until the divorce trial.

At an earlier hearing in the Senate, I heard the testimony of Kim Johnson (Agassiz Valley Social Service Zone Director). She stated that North Dakota has 20,000 CPS cases filed each year. She also said that 93% - 95% of the cases contain false allegations. Please consider the children! They are questioned by social workers, doctors, counselors and police officers. They are the innocent victims of divorce.

I ask you to please support this bill. Please consider the lives of the many children that are stuck in the middle of a parent or parents that can't seem to put their children first. If this bill would have been in effect at the time my daughter-in-law filed the false CPS allegations, there would have been consequences for her actions. Please give the law enforcement officials the "tools" to protect North Dakota's innocent children.