

Social Services Committee

Good Afternoon House Health and ~~Education Committee Members.~~

Thank you for listening to my testimony today.

My name is Joseph Coulter-Khan. I am fourteen years old.

I am here to tell you why I think ~~House Bill~~ ^{HB} 334 is a step in the wrong direction.

My father has not been convicted of domestic violence, but I am legitimately terrified of him. When I lived with him, I saw him yell constantly. I saw him beat up my sister and shove her down the stairs. I saw him constantly threaten my mother, my sisters, and me. He embarrasses me in public with his yelling and anger. I'm afraid of being with him. Every time I get a phone call my stomach drops, I start to sweat, to panic, pace, and go into a whole anxiety attack. I start hyperventilating.

and

I don't want to live with that kind of pressure and anxiety. It is a negative energy and distracts me from my schoolwork and from doing the things that I love.

Because my father has not been convicted of domestic violence, if HB 334 passes I would have to go with someone who has abused me for 10-12 years. Why should I be with him? Why should he have the right to me when he is the one who abused me? If he has a say in everything I do, he may make decisions that are not the best for me. He told me that if he gets full custody he will take me to Arizona and not let me contact my mother at all. He says bad things to me about my mother.

Some mothers are too afraid to call the police because they are afraid of what the abusers will do to them when they get out. So then there are abusers who get custody because they aren't held accountable for their abuse.

My childhood was stressful and now that I'm away from my father I'm feeling better. If I have to spend more time with him, it will waste the rest of the childhood that I have. I won't have a regular childhood.

You don't know my father. You don't know what he's done. But there is no conviction of domestic violence.

HB 334 violates my rights as a minor to safety from my abusive father.