

My name is Laura Beattie-Proctor, and I am honored to speak with you today regarding Sean's Law.

The rights of children in their family relationships are as fundamental as those of their parents. Children **MUST** be recognized as individuals who have their own interests and rights, including the right to be part of a stable and permanent family, and the right to remain part of that family once it is established with an expectation that the status will be permanent. If anything, children's rights are more compelling than adults', because children's interests in family relationships are more than the emotional and social interests that adults have in family life. Children's interests also include the practical needs of the small and helpless to be protected from harm and to have stable and permanent homes in which each child's mind and character can grow, unhampered by uncertainty and fear of what the next day, week, or court appearance may bring.

The best interests of a child is a phrase we have all heard, but like many phrases, it can mean many things to many people. It means only one thing to children, though, it means home. It means that there is a place where they feel safe, secure, loved, & cherished. A place where there is food in the refrigerator, clean clothes for school, books to read, and visits to the doctor when needed. We all know that there is no one size fits all solution to children's welfare – no one kind of family will work for every child, but if our courts have a law that says they must take the best interests of a child into account, I know it will save lives.

Since the 4 day long torture of Dominick Calhoun, in 2010, resulting in his death, many things have come to light. His maternal grandparents tried to get custody from his mother because of her drug addiction resulting bad choices. The courts denied their petition, our courts failed Dominick. They failed him to death. I lobbied Senators & Representatives to get Dominick's Law enacted. There must be severe penalties for those who commit violent crimes against children, but why must we wait until a child is dead before their best interest is taken into account?

In 1959, the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1386 was enacted, which clearly states, "The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration." I cannot believe that over 50 years later, Michigan is ready to set forth in writing a specific formula to that ensure children their best interest is the focus of all legal proceedings in which they are involved. You have the ability to do something great, to pass a law that will save the lives of children. Sean's Law, will save lives. Thank you for making it happen.