

Chairman Caltagirone, members of the Committee, and guests.

My name is Sheila Behr. I am currently teaching kindergarten in the city of Philadelphia and have done so for 22 years. I have 63 credits above a Master's Degree as well as a supervisory certificate. My classroom has been described in *What Works in the Classroom Practical Strategies*, edited by Walls and King, and in Helen Oakes' *Newsletter*.

I support HB #826. It is vital to stop people from making false accusations because only then will uncoached children be believed.

Presently, social workers from Children and Youth Services are not adequately trained to make judgments concerning allegations of sexual abuse. Indeed, local universities do not offer any training in this area. Since social workers have immunity from prosecution, they may make any decision they wish, including voiding a board-certified psychiatrist's report. They may do this with impunity even though the law requires an investigation by law-enforcement officers. By law, an investigation must be launched within 24 hours of a filed report, but children may be forced to stay in an abusive situation for days, permitting coercion ^{or coaching} of the children involved.

Rape Crisis has informed me, "that CYS very frequently finds many cases unfounded, only to discover later children seriously injured." CYS workers are so deficient in their knowledge of the law that they have testified in court that for a case to be founded, a child "must be maimed"; for a sexual abuse case to be founded, "the perpetrator must gain sexual gratification." In addition, a Philadelphia CYS supervisor in a speech to a group of Main Line women stated that any party could obtain a guardian-ad-litem. She did not know that a judge must appoint such a guardian; it is not an automatic procedure.

Judges, as well as the public, believe that CYS workers are unbiased and concerned with the children's welfare. Unfortunately, too often this is not the case. Even more unfortunate is the fact that the internal notes of CYS workers are not available to the families who are involved. Therefore, anything may be written without allowing the input of the concerned parties. Under the cloak of confidentiality, no information is released to those most involved. If, by some

accident, these notes are obtained, the lies are evident. The confidentiality clause protects only CYS, not the children. In addition, in direct violation of the law, CYS personnel will frequently have ex-parte communication with a judge.

It is important to note that "unfounded" does not mean not founded, but rather "unproved."

When social workers act upon reports without thorough, expert, outside professional investigation, they are, in effect, both perpetrators and abettors in the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse of our children. A child willing to disclose abuse^{"if you will protect me"} to a psychologist appointed to his case by CYS was never permitted to do so because "the case has already been unfounded." When asked how he knew this without ever interviewing the child, the psychologist answered, "CYS said so." It is obvious that case histories are predetermined, and CYS gets what it pays for.

Child rights organizations all over the country believe that children are most frequently given to the abusive parent.

Children & Youth Services of both Montgomery and Philadelphia counties are currently operating under a provisional license because of the poor quality of service they are rendering.

We must stop child abuse by the perpetrators and those agencies that are supposed to protect the children --but do not. We must erase child abuse from the home, and, hopefully, everywhere.