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My name is Melissa Foran. My husband Richard Foran are in favor having an Investigator General.

My story may sound familiar to you as I had shared it with you before on another bill. The situation that we are in is not uncommon in the foster system. I personally have spoken with 13 different people in a similar situation.

It often sounds like this. Foster or adoptive parents advocated for the child or children for several months or years to the caseworker. After many months or years of not seeing the caseworker do much to help them, the foster parent starts to be more vocal and show frustration. The caseworker then tells the foster parent that they will be investigated and miraculously something strange happens and they are. Some get substantiated and others do not. Regardless, the children are removed. The substantiations are overturned due to lack of evidence but the children are not returned. It sounds horrible for the foster parent, sure. But what about the children? What about the bonds that they made after learning to trust again and some learning to trust for the first time? Most kids don't find their-forever home easily. So, when they are pulled out of a home, they may go into a few homes before they find one that has the room or the patience to deal with their particular needs.

When a caseworker is disgruntled and is investigating the foster parents that they are disgruntled with, they can not have an unbiased opinion. OCFS can't either if they have grown to love and appreciate the caseworker but also, it is hard for anyone especially and an organization so powerful to admit they made a mistake. When they make a mistake, you have to go through the court system and we are currently without our boys for 8 months and have not had a hearing yet. They will only tell you that it is not in the best interest of the children. They hide behind that statement even when there are no facts to back that up. Even when they haven't checked references to back the foster parents case.

So children pay for OCFS mistakes. The children lose their parents, their foster parents, their innocence, their trust, pieces of their souls, mental and emotional health when OCFS makes a mistake and doesn't fix it. It's those same kids, that they swore to protect that they are ripping apart. It is not okay for them to be in charge of their own investigation and not have someone to oversee it. I believe a completely separate organization needs to be in charge of the investigations.

If a separate organization is in charge, that means that the caseworker, can't be disgruntled and try to find fault. It means the department can't find that one thing that isn't perfect. Foster parents are not robots. We are humans that literally change our whole lives to make room in our hearts and homes and families for children we have never met. And somehow, they become our whole world.

Our caseworker, the licensing worker and the investigator all interviewed the same people for an incident at the school. Our caseworker is the only one that came up with a story that sounds violent unlike the other interviews. According to her, my husband hit a wall and nearly broke a door frame along with flailing his arms, and yelling so loud in the lobby at a school that kids in a classroom could hear him. According to our licensing worker who interviewed the same people, they said Rich seemed mad, SAID nothing, headed for the door and pushed the door open aggressively, then yelled outside. Based on my husband's actions and outburst, the children were removed from our home a few hours later. In the licensing worker's interview, my husband came off mad but not violent. If you asked my husband, he wasn't mad but frustrated that no one told him that our foster son got rushed to the hospital.

The investigator interviewed the children with the caseworker present. Although he told me on 3 different occasions, he could tell there was lots of love in our house, he substantiated us. The adoption supervisor said they would not return the boys based

on the children's testimonies. On our Discovery, the boy that was removed basically said we were perfect parents. My adopted son seemed to be giving them different answers. A previous OCFS employee said that his answers seemed as if he was trying to give them the answer they wanted to hear. I could only read the response but not the question on the Discovery. It was evident he was answering the same question 3 times though. He gave them 3 different answers. What they didn't do during the investigation was take into consideration the trauma that a child has from talking to DHHS before being removed from their Bioparents and any diagnosis that they have. His neuropsych said that he was in his 8th percentile of language, he was very impulsive and he doesn't pay attention when someone is talking or asking questions. He also has trauma. They interviewed a former foster child that had been at my house for a short time who has Reactive Attachment Disorder. They are known to lie. Some say it's like a hobby because they do it for fun. In this case, I think this girl was hurt that she would not be returning as she had planned and made up stories to make me sound abusive. She even went to the point of saying that I feed the kids moldy food because I was writing a children's book on food and that the house was unsanitary. Yet, it's the same girl that continually asked me to permanently keep her. However, I had typically had 4 or 5 mandated reporters at my house weekly and no one thought my house was unsanitary. Based on the two interviews done by people that don't understand children's diagnosis, we were told the foster children who were in the process of adoption and had been with us for 19 months would not return. This is not okay.

On top of this, no one from OCFS reached out to professional references that could verify that the foster boys were living in a loving and safe home. And they never reached out to any of the mandated reporters. OCFS was very one sided.

I am also not able to go to my son's school because I waved back at the previous foster son and was served with Harrassment papers. All I did was wave back and blow a kiss to the former foster son but the caseworker says the school said that I was waving and trying to get his attention. Another time, I apparently corned him, hugged him and told him that I loved him secretly while he was holding the hand of the teacher during a parade. How would the teacher never see me do this? After speaking with the principal about this, I believe she only reported that I was there and what he had said. It was evident that I was not trying to get his attention as I have video on my phone of all of my visits since the school incident. So now, I can't go to the assemblies that my son wants me to go to. I'm now supposed to neglect my son's need for support because OCFS says to