

James Cornwall
New Gloucester
LD 1024

Good morning ladies and gentlemen of the State of Maine Legislature Committee on JUDICIARY.

My name is James Cornwall, I am a resident of New Gloucester and a divorced father with three sons. I can proudly and honestly say I was an outstanding father. I also can say their mother also loves them very much. I am writing this testimony in support of LD1024.

We had attended marriage counseling with 5 different counselors, all the while I was reading many books on relationships. All to no avail, our relationship was unfortunately broken beyond repair. The fighting was out of control, rather than a trusting loving relationship, it was filled with jealousy, insecurity, gaslighting and disdain. At that time I felt the best course of action for our boys was to end our marriage and filed for divorce. Our boys were 12, 14 and 17 at the time.

Needless to say the divorce process did not go nearly as smoothly as I hoped it would. I started this journey fully expecting the system to be adequate and the results to provide a better longer term situation for my boys. It has been a long emotional journey to say the least.

Recovery from divorce is often compared to the grieving process when a loved one is lost, at least in the near term. The 5 stages of grief are fully experienced, the difference being acceptance and the long term emotional scars we all carry from it. I am no longer the father I once was, that ended with divorce. I am still a good father, but our relationships have suffered needlessly.

This study will quickly show the same as the numerous other studies, children of divorce statistically:

- Are more likely to experience behavior issues
- Higher rates of attempted suicide
- Experience more mental health issues
- Propensity of developing unhealthy relationships
- Higher risk of teen pregnancy
- Higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse
- Twice as likely to drop out of high school
- Have lower academic performance
- Are at a greater risk of living in poverty
- 70% of prison inmates come from broken homes
- In other words, there is much less chance of leading a successful enjoyable life.

There is very little doubt children do best when both parents are present in their lives.

I believe this study could lead to many great things. The best way to reduce the effects of divorce is to reduce the rate of divorce. I am hopeful that an emphasis on education on relationships will help reduce the number and frequency of divorce. It is so often said, "had I known then what I know now". Relationships are difficult, ever changing and no two are alike. We teach our kids reading, writing and arithmetic, it's time we start teaching about relationships. We encounter so many types of relationships in our lifetime yet we fail to have the fundamental knowledge of them. Friendships, coworkers, classmates, teachers, neighbors, family, the boss, the plow guy, the postman and even the trash man are all some form of a relationship.

This is me being the best father I can be.

Thank you very much for your time, and consideration.

James Cornwall
New Gloucester