



**Kathleen Russell Testimony to the  
California Board of Psychology  
California State Capitol, Sacramento  
February 16, 2018**

Mr. Chairman & Members of the Board:

We have attended all but one of your meetings over the last year, following you around this great state of California in an effort to educate you about a child safety crisis in the family court system that is being fueled, in large part, by your licensees. Your licensees are often appointed by family law judges to work in family law cases, and they charge extremely high, unregulated fees with parents and children who are sometimes literally fighting for their lives, and the lives of their children.

These cases typically involve a parent with a history of domestic violence, child sexual abuse, or drug and alcohol addiction- and quite often, a loving and protective parent who is seeking a divorce specifically because they are attempting to protect their children (and sometimes themselves) from ongoing violence or abuse.

Our society spends millions of dollars trying to convince women to leave abusive relationships, and yet so many of your licensees appear hell-bent on forcing children to continue having ongoing contact with an abusive parent that their other parent is being encouraged to flee from. This makes no sense whatsoever if your profession is truly committed to healing trauma, rather than causing trauma in children.

There is an extensive body of literature on domestic violence, child abuse and addiction which explains the harm that children experience when they are forced to visit or live with a violent and abusive parent post-divorce, or with a parent dealing with true parenting challenges, like addiction to alcohol, drugs or pornography.

The American Bar Association published a comprehensive article written by Allen Bailey in its Judges Journal in 2013 that spells out specific and grave psychological risks of damage to children who are forced to engage unsupervised with a violent parent. I've brought copies of this article for each of you to review at your leisure. Please read it as I think you will find it helpful in understanding why we continue to show up at your meetings.

You see, many of your licensees are leaders and members of the California chapter of the **AFCC, the Association of Family & Conciliation Courts**, a well-funded trade organization that routinely trains PhD psychologists, judges, lawyers and other mental health professionals in harmful practices such as “reunification therapy.” Your licensees profit quite handsomely off of these family violence cases, yet they repeatedly place children at risk.

The work of these licensees’ in the courts is protected by quasi-judicial immunity. So if a child or parent is harmed by one of your licensees during a custody case, as we know from our 12 years in this field that many are, then they in fact have nowhere to turn for justice for their mistreatment except for this Board. These Californians cannot sue their psychologist. They cannot fire the psychologist. And worse, they are frequently forced to pay large sums of money to a psychologist that is often forcing their children to participate in dangerous, unethical “threat therapies” that traumatize children by forcing them into ongoing contact with a violent parent.

For 30 years, no one believed Dr. Nassar’s victims because it was impossible for them to imagine that a respectable doctor could harm so many children. For more than 30 years, no one believed the millions of children who reported being raped and abused by priests.

For the past year, our organization has diligently tried to educate this Board about frequent, unethical and harmful misconduct being committed by this Board’s licensees.

During your Fall 2017 Meeting in Berkeley, your Enforcement Manager announced that 21 licensees had 2-5 complaints pending against them, totaling 50 complaints. **She explained that one of your Board’s licensees has 4 complaints pending, while another has a whopping 5 complaints against him or her.** When asked by a Board member about the disposition of “multiple complaints” against the same licensees, the Manager answered that they are still pending, with no action.

So I must implore this Board, in response: The California Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) issued Prioritization Guidelines in Feb. 2017 that were shared with all DCA Boards, including yours. These guidelines clearly spell out the difference between urgent cases and those that are less urgent. Is this Board even using these guidelines as it engages in its vital enforcement activities to protect the public from unethical PhD psychologists in this state? Why was there no mention of these guidelines when we requested that this Board prioritize complaints involving minor children? Children’s lives are being destroyed. Thank you for your time and attention to addressing these grave concerns and doing your job to protect the public.