



MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
**WITNESS APPEARANCE FORM**

BILL NUMBER: <b>HB 3451</b>		DATE: <b>3/10/2026</b>
COMMITTEE: <b>Children and Families</b>		
<b>TESTIFYING:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN SUPPORT OF <input type="checkbox"/> IN OPPOSITION TO <input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES		
<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>REGISTERED LOBBYIST:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>ANNE BASHAM</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
REPRESENTING: <b>STREET GRACE</b>		TITLE: <b>CEO, ASCEND CONSULTING; FORMER FOSTER SIBLING AND</b>
ADDRESS: <b>4000 LEGATO RD. PMB 6025 SUITE 1100</b>		
CITY: <b>FAIRFAX</b>	STATE: <b>VA</b>	ZIP: <b>22033</b>
EMAIL: <b>anne@ascendconsultingdc.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/9/2026 8:32 PM</b>
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**Introduction**

My name is Anne Basham. I am the CEO of Ascend Consulting, a former foster sibling, and a former Senior Advisor for the Department of Justice's Office for Victims of Crime. I submit this testimony in strong support of HB 3451 on behalf of Street Grace, an anti-child exploitation organization working at the intersection of foster care and child exploitation.

**A Child's Voice, Silenced: The Case for HB 3451**

I want to begin with a real story — one that represents thousands of cases that would have ended very differently had this bill been in effect. "Gracie," as I will refer to her, was a young girl caught in a nightmare too many children face. Her parents were divorced, and during a visit to her father's home, a quarrel escalated into physical violence: her father grabbed her by the neck. In the Commonwealth of Virginia, this act can constitute a felony, and research consistently identifies this as a statistically significant predictor of future lethality. The incident was reported by Gracie to a school counselor, and the case was referred to Child Protective Services (CPS). A CPS caseworker came to interview Gracie at her mother's home, and her mother overheard the interview from the next room. She was shocked when the case was summarily dismissed. Months later, it was discovered that the official report distorted Gracie's testimony entirely, characterizing the assault as a mere "grab to the arm." Her voice had been erased. Her testimony had been rewritten by a stranger with a pen. Gracie's story is not an isolated tragedy. It is a systemic failure —one that HB 3451 is designed to prevent.

**The Data Demands Action**

According to current research, 37.4 percent of children in the United States will be interviewed by CPS before the age of 18. Without recordings, nearly 40% of children's testimonies are vulnerable to misrepresentation whether through negligence, bias, or worse. Accurate recordings also reduce trauma by limiting the number of times a child must repeat their account to different investigators.

**A Question of Accountability**

Consider the proceeding before this committee. Every word spoken today is being recorded. Official records will reflect each statement made by witnesses. That standard of accountability exists because the public interest demands it. Now imagine that instead of a stenographer and recording equipment, there was only a single observer in this room — not a neutral recorder, but a person who wrote down their own interpretation of what was said. Would any member of this committee accept that personal

analysis as the authoritative record of their testimony? Would you trust the most important statements of your professional life to one stranger with a pen? That is precisely the situation child victims face every day.

#### **Best Practice — Long Overdue**

The lack of transparency and accountability within child welfare systems is deeply troubling, particularly when viewed alongside the standards applied in other contexts. Law enforcement officers are required to wear body cameras in most states. The Department of Justice's Office on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention identified recording child interviews as a "best practice" as far back as 2015. More than 900 federally funded Child Advocacy Centers operating in all 50 states already record child interviews as a matter of standard procedure. As a former CPS caseworker who supports this bill recently reminded me: even routine physician office visits are now routinely audio recorded. Yet child victims who among the most vulnerable individuals in our legal and social systems are afforded no such protection.

#### **Growing Bipartisan Momentum**

Ten states have committed to introduce a version of this bill in 2026, and Virginia passed the bill unanimously on February 26th of this year. Arizona has passed it unanimously so far through their House and Senate HHS subcommittee as well, and we are hopeful to see the same in Missouri. The bill is gaining is gaining incredible momentum because child protection transcends political affiliation.

#### **Conclusion**

HB 3451 is a straightforward, evidence-based measure that would hold child welfare interviews to the same standard of accountability we apply to law enforcement interactions, medical appointments, and legislative proceedings. It would ensure that when a child like Gracie finds the courage to speak, her words are preserved accurately and completely so that the system can protect her rather than fail her.

I respectfully urge this committee to pass HB 3451 and to do so with the same unanimity seen in other states. The children of this state deserve no less.



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>ARNIE C. A.C. "HONEST ABE" DIENOFF</b>		PHONE NUMBER: <b>314-440-9000</b>
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS: <b>PO BOX 1535</b>		
CITY: <b>O'FALLON</b>		STATE: <b>MO</b>
		ZIP: <b>63366</b>
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE:	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/10/2026 12:00 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>CHERYL DELUCA-JOHNSON</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME: <b>STREET GRACE</b>		TITLE:	
ADDRESS: <b>5995 FINANCIAL DR. STE 180</b>			
CITY: <b>NORCROSS</b>		STATE: <b>GA</b>	ZIP: <b>30071</b>
EMAIL: <b>Delucajohnson3232@gmail.com</b>	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/9/2026 4:27 PM</b>	
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Dear Chairwoman Jones and members of the House Children and Families Committee:

My name is Cheryl Deluca-Johnson, founding CEO of Street Grace, Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and mother of 6 children, two of whom were adopted out of the foster care system at ages 9 and 10. I am writing to support HB 3451.

Through my work at Street Grace, an organization that works to end the sex trafficking of children, I learned there was a correlation between foster care and trafficked children. It is estimated that 60% of trafficked children have had an interaction with CPS and that 37% of all children will have a CPS encounter.

Through my work as a licensed counselor, I know that children express themselves in a different language than adults, especially in areas of trauma, and that children’s language can often be neglected or misunderstood in these instances. So, when testimony from a child relies on the interpretation and accuracy of an adult to be recorded appropriately, there is a wide margin for error.

My experience as a parent of children adopted through the foster care system has placed me at the frontline to witness how information that is misinterpreted or neglected can affect the outcome of the child’s future and the future of that child’s family.

Our two youngest daughters were adopted at the ages of 9 and 10 in 2011. They had over 12 placements prior to us, some promising permanency that did not occur. We know there was abuse because of the overly sexualized behaviors, stealing, violence, and other behaviors that they displayed. We also noticed a scarring behind the ears of one of our daughters that could not be explained.

Although the social workers who helped place them with us were caring and had been with them the longest, we could not piece together parts of their past that would have helped with their psychological, social and physical development. Written notes were vague and incomplete. Periods of time were completely missing. This delayed us getting appropriate treatment in a timely manner.

The other mitigating factor that delayed helping our daughters is that they had learned, from repeatedly being asked the same questions, to try to give the “right” answers. These answers were often untrue. This is also the problem with not having recorded interviews. The child is asked repeatedly to repeat a

story, and traumatized children just want to please the adult and change the story to achieve this goal.

All these experiences leave no doubt that we should afford our most traumatized children, because they don't come to CPS when lives are good, the reliability that their story will be properly recorded and that they will not have to continue to relive the trauma that brought them to CPS. We may also learn from these recordings how to understand the language that children use in these situations to identify red flags for abuse earlier. Most importantly, we would be better able to appropriately support these children in a timely manner.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB 3451. Thank you for your service and for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,  
Cheryl DeLuca-Johnson



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>JANET WELCH</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:                  ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/10/2026 9:24 AM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>KATHERINE GREEN</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/9/2026 12:42 PM</b>	
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**This should be recorded to see if any child is tripped up by a professional. Sometimes a child can also be under a lot of anxiety and I think it's important to have these recordings to go back to.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>MICAH WASHAM BAUER</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>		SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/10/2026 8:06 AM</b>
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**I am voting as a voice for the kids.**



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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>		
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>		
WITNESS NAME: <b>TEMBER CRIPE</b>		PHONE NUMBER:
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:
ADDRESS:		
CITY:		STATE:                  ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/10/2026 7:36 PM</b>
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<b>WITNESS NAME</b>			
<b>INDIVIDUAL:</b>			
WITNESS NAME: <b>SARAH BERRY</b>		PHONE NUMBER:	
BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION NAME:		TITLE:	
ADDRESS:			
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:
EMAIL:	ATTENDANCE: <b>Written</b>	SUBMIT DATE: <b>3/9/2026 9:21 PM</b>	
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**HB 3451 tells the state to record child abuse interviews, then tells the accused they largely cannot do anything when the state fails to do so.**

**That is not a true accountability statute. It is a no-remedy mandate.**

**If recorded interviews matter, then failure to preserve them should matter too. Otherwise this bill risks creating the appearance of evidentiary reform without the substance of it.**

**This notice is submitted to preserve the legislative record regarding legal and structural concerns arising from House Bill 3451.**

**HB 3451 would require the Department of Social Services to record face-to-face interviews conducted in child abuse or neglect assessments involving a child and any adult associated with the assessment. While the stated objective of preserving interviews may advance accountability and evidentiary reliability, the bill contains a significant structural limitation: it expressly provides that an accused person may not successfully object to the department’s failure to comply with the recording requirement and that such failure shall not, by itself, preclude admission of the child’s statements.**

**This creates a substantial tension within the statute. The bill imposes a mandatory recording obligation while simultaneously insulating noncompliance from meaningful procedural consequence. Where the legislature mandates preservation of investigative evidence but largely forecloses effective challenge when the state fails to preserve it, due process and fundamental fairness concerns are implicated.**

**In addition, the bill excuses noncompliance in cases of equipment malfunction or unforeseeable circumstances, but provides no clear statutory framework for documenting, reviewing, or testing those claimed exceptions. Without clear standards, the practical force of the recording requirement may be significantly weakened.**

**HB 3451 therefore risks creating an evidentiary preservation mandate without a corresponding enforcement structure, leaving courts and litigants with limited ability to assess the reliability and completeness of unrecorded interviews in proceedings involving serious allegations.**

**This notice is submitted to preserve the legislative record regarding those concerns.**