

I'm extremely sorry that I will be unavailable to attend the "*listening session*" concerning the NH "Equal Parenting Rights" community scheduled for October 2 in Concord. I do, however, want to make my voice heard, albeit briefly, in this message.

I am Dad to a beautiful 9-year old daughter. Since my divorce in 1998 when Phoenix Alicia was 2...I have had several "*experiences*" with the "**inequities**" of the NH Family Court system. As a matter of fact...after 7+years I am **STILL** battling for my "**EQUAL**" rights as a FATHER. For the last 14 months I've been involved in litigation to stop a "relocation" by my daughter's mother to North Carolina. Needless to say it has been the latest in a *never-ending* series of **emotionally** and **financially** draining events. And, once again has re-enforced the ABSOLUTE fact that, overall, in the state of NH a CARING, DEVOTED father is someone that NH's current, "*marital masters*" and family court "*judges*" are unable to recognize. What's more, I've found, more than once, the "**best interests of the child**" has become nothing more than "**judicial rhetoric** !" Because the original "decree" gave me "*joint legal*" custody which, as you know, gives Phoenix's mother almost complete "control" (even though my daughter is with me 4-nights/week) over my relationship with my daughter.. I've returned to court many times in my *quest* to "*rectify*" (modify) the situation to reflect "**reality**" instead of what the "courts" see as just another *run-of-the-mill* divorce, custody, visitation, MAXIMUM child support (even though my daughter's *CHOOSES* not to work) case.

These last several years have been the most **frustrating** of my life. My only *saving grace* is the relationship I've been able to build with my daughter. She is MY ENTIRE life. And even though she is happy, flourishing in school, involved in our church, a budding soccer and skating star..I can only imagine how much better things would be( for Phoenix) if her mother took even the SLIGHTEST interest in "**CO-PARENTING**" of any kind .

The EQUAL PARENTING RIGHTS initiative is one of the most **important** I can remember in the 25 years I've called NH home. Although it may not solve EVERY problem facing family court and please ALL parties in EVERY CASE...in cases, like mine, where GOOD FATHERS have had to repeatedly PROVE their "worth" (usually at TREMENDOUS EXPENSE) in their children's lives>>>>THEN LET IT BE DONE !!!!