

Wednesday, April 9, 2025

Chair Melanie Scheible
Vice Chair Edgar Flores
Senate Judiciary Committee
Nevada State Senate

Dear Chair Scheible, Vice Chair Flores, and all members of the committee,

My name is Beth Smith, and I am in strong support of SB432. Last week, I sat before you all and shared a small part of my personal story with family court proceedings, domestic abuse, and custody/visitation agreements in Nevada. I am encouraged to see this important work continue with making sure that sensitive cases in family court remain closed and private to all those who are testifying on the sensitive matter.

Family court proceedings involving minor children and histories of abuse are deeply personal and should not be open for public view and recorded by those masquerading as “media”. Domestic violence voyeurism has no place in Nevada’s family court system, and yet it is happening. I know this because I have firsthand experience with this abhorrent practice. Despite leaving my abuser years ago, we share legal custody of our child, and I continue to face ongoing legal interactions with him. Following the Falconi Supreme Court ruling, our most recent custody hearing became a public spectacle where I was horrifically harassed and forced to recount intimate details of my abuse on public record in front of a full court room there to intimate and embarrass me in tandem with my abuser. Not only that, but all public portions of our multi-day family court hearing were recorded through video and audio by individuals who present themselves as the “media”. Those recordings are now online for quite literally anyone in this world to watch. This is a traumatic and painful violation for my child and me that can never be undone.

To this day, I am deeply impacted by that hearing. My son and I deserved privacy and to navigate that difficult situation in private with only the judge, and those necessary to the case present. Instead, only a small portion of my own testimony was closed. The rest, including all testimony by my abuser, was open, which allowed for details of our personal lives to be put on display for the public. This is exactly what my abuser wanted and had previously threatened to do as punishment for coming forward with the truth of his actions.

He fought and won the right to keep the hearing open to the public following the Falconi decision, even though the person harmed the most was our child. This is also why the room must be closed to all people testifying on the sensitive matter that the courtroom closure is based on. It does no good to close the court for one person testifying on the sensitive matter and then allow all others to discuss the same sensitive matter in public.

AB432 is a necessary tool that ensures individuals do not fear family court proceedings and have a course of action to keep the court room closed if doing so will keep the child safe and limit harassment, intimidation, and further abuse. It also codifies this protection by law, so Family Court judges have clear direction and authority following the Falconi decision. I believe a law like this would have helped my Family Court judge, my son, and me in my situation. I urge your passage of this critical piece of legislation and thank you for your time. Please reach out if you have any questions or would like to further discuss my support for this bill.

Most sincerely,

Beth Smith

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