

To: Law and Justice Interim Committee
Montana State Legislature

Date: November 16, 2005

My name is Jane V. Sewell and I am a resident of Lincoln, Montana. I am disabled with Multiple Sclerosis and unable to work. I have a son, now age 6 years, and am unmarried. My income is from Social Security and TANIF and I have MediCare and Medicaid for our medical expenses.

My son's father, although able to do so, has been unwilling to help in any way with the support of his son. I needed to have some legal determination of my custody rights and child support entitlement, but had no money at all with which to hire an attorney and have my case heard in court.

Two years ago, attorney Elizabeth Baker of Helena agreed to handle my case pro bono for all her time, billing me only for her law firm's actual out-of-pocket costs. We met several times and she drew up a Parenting Plan which was approved by the District Court Judge, which granted sole custody of my son to me and set out specific requirements the father must meet in the event he decides to exercise visitation rights. She also drew up power of attorney, guardianship, will and trust documents in the event I should become further disabled.

I would not have been able to have all of these legal matters determined and accomplished if Beth had not agreed to represent me pro bono. I was constantly worried about the father showing up and taking my son and I had no legal recourse if he had done that; or, if I became further disabled, what would happen to my son. I now have peace of mind, knowing everything is legally determined and in place and according to my wishes.

Sincerely,

Jane V. Sewell
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