

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMPILATION OF PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Submitted to the Committee on Juvenile Justice & Family Issues
For HB 969

Compiled on: Wednesday, April 19, 2023 9:40 PM

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Hearing Date: April 19, 2023 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

Lupe Ovalles
Self- Retired
San Antonio, TX

Please vote this bill is approved. As a grandparent of two grandsons that have been kept from us by their father who never followed court order and was never penalized, he kept them from their own mother too. this bill will help in getting orders to be followed as per the custody order. Ty

Anthony Brassil
National Parents Organization
Houston, TX

I support this bill as it allows there to be a reasonable and very enforceable mechanism to enforce child custody orders. This is a common sense and logical way to handle child custody interference.

Jacquelyn Ovalles
Self
San Antonio, TX

I support this bill - children should have access to both parents in their life.

Cynthia Gutierrez
JAM LIGHTING ELECTRICAL SERVICES
San Antonio, TX

I highly support this vote. A child should never be alienated from either of their parents because no matter what, a child needs a mom and a dad in their life.

Claudia Ovalles
National Parents Organization
San Antonio, TX

Please vote YES for this bill!

1K violations are reported every month in San Antonio, TX alone, including my own experience with my son. Thousands of other violations are occurring across the state as well.

This bill would assist the state of Texas in the following ways:

- Provide law enforcement with a tool to mitigate the 1000s of occurrences across the state;
- Ensure that children have access to both loving parents;
- Reduce domestic violence statistics long term, as this violation is a crime under family violence (Texas Family Violence Benchbook, 2011);
- Allow law enforcement to use this tool to reduce lengthy incident calls so that they can better utilize their services on other emergency calls
- Generate funds for the municipality as a new ticketing item

As a part of Child Abuse Awareness Month, - the City of San Antonio recognized April 8th as Interference with Child Custody Awareness Day. This was a first-time recognition in Texas history.

On behalf of the National Parents Organization and on the continued efforts to protect parent-child relationships in Texas, please vote yes on HB969.

Respectfully,
Claudia Ovalles
NPO - Texas Veteran Advocate
Chair - Heroes for Children's Rights

Monica Hernandez
Self/Human Resources Business Partner
San Antonio, TX

I fully support this bill. Please vote yes to ensure TX kids see both parents like they should. Not holding parents accountable will have lasting negative affects on children.
Thank you!

Daniel Quezada

Self

Fulshear, TX

This has directly affected me in enforcing my custody order that was signed 2015. I have repeatedly been denied my visitation over the years and everytime I would call the police to make an offense report for Felony Interference of Custody, law enforcement would repeatedly tell me it was a civil matter or that it only applied to the Non Custodial parent. I have lost years of my child's life while the Parent who chose to not follow an order got away with it. It has now costs me \$33,000 to finally take the alienating parent back to court to win custody over a child who thinks I was never there. This has to end, children are being misled by these perpetrators. I was always there, the child never was and never saw all the attempts I made to go to the pickup location and no one being home. Please enforce this to put any parent regardless of custodial,non custodial to abide by the orders that were put in place. Thank you

Sergio Estrada

Self

Seagoville, TX

To whom it may concern:

My name is Sergio Estrada and I am in support of House Bill 969. Our children deserve the right to have access to both fit. This is imperative if we are to have a bright future for this country. One parent having to ability to limit or completely cut off the other parent is not fair to the child nor to the other fit, capable, most of all loving parent. Here in Texas this is the case far too often where one parent keeps the other parent from seeing their children. These parents need to understand that this behavior is not healthy nor loving to the children nor beneficial to our society. Many of these alienated parents have custody agreements in place, only to continually see that it is not being followed by the offending parent nor are there any consequences being brought forth towards said parent. This is a great tragedy to our Texas children and we need to address these issues and find resolution before our society suffers further collapse.

Deana Hebert

Self

Pearland, TX

Being a parent affected by interference with child custody, I whole-heartedly support this bill. Repeated offenses without consequences leads to days, months, years, and in my case decades (28 years) of parents being separated from their child/ren breaking the parent/child bond that sometimes can never be repaired. Please support this bill and help break the cycle of broken family relationships and help Texas lead by example. Sincerely, Deana Hebert, Mom of Bianca Lozano (Parental Abduction victim from Harris County, Tx 28 years missing)

Victor Garay, SGT

Self

El Paso, TX

My name Is Victor Garay. I am a father in the great state of Texas and have been subjected to the injustice of the biased family courts against fathers. In addition, as a present father I have had to endure my time with my son being cut short or visitation will forgone completely due to the other parents negligence and abuse of custody. My ex spouse has been a repeat violator of our current parenting order established by the 383rd district court in El Paso county. She has yet to be held accountable and probably will not be due to the lack of enforcement of the 25.03 violations. I have stressed the importance of enforcement of those orders due to the nature of her repeat offense and lack of regard or respect for the law established by the order. It is extremely difficult to co-parent when the orders in place are made a mockery. It is imperative that we establish order and ensure that the conditions specified are being followed. I urge you to make the necessary adjustments and support HB969 in its current run for approval. This would dramatically increase the chances of fathers effectively excercising their visitation rights uninterrupted and without pretense. We as fathers only wish to do exactly that, be fathers. Thank you for your consideration.

Kinda regards,

Victor Garay

El Paso, Texas

Gregory Taylor, Retired MSgt

Victim to Heroes

San Antonio, TX

I personally experience interference with child custody with my step son. This could be a great tool for law enforcement to enforce the law without arresting the primary custodian. This may also mitigate family violence issues over time by addressing the issue in the early stages of domestic violence. I completely support this option. Because as it stands now the options are either go nuclear by arresting the parent. Or, do nothing at all. I pray you will support and pass this bill. Thank you.

Joyce Rosa

Self/Child Advocacy

Austin, TX

Dear member, I am against and concerned of the unintended consequences of this bill as it puts adults entitlement or rights above that of the children. Specifically, where there has been proven or suspected sexual or physical abuse. I oppose the enactment of this new proposed revision and pray the committee denies such motion.

Bryan Arriola

Self

Port Lavaca, TX

I support this bill. There are parents like myself who have felt the pain of not being able to see their child due to law enforcement not wanting to enforce penal code 25.03. This July will mark 4 years since I have seen or spoken to my oldest daughter. My 2 younger children have asked about their sister and have gone on this journey of trying get my court order enforced with me and my spouse. Although some momentum has been going with the fathers rights movement, I'm afraid not all Texas counties are enforcing what is law. This bill would help because officers wouldn't be conflicted in if they need to follow what their DA is failing to do vs what they can do for the parents who are being denied their visitation or custody of their children.

I know if this bill passes it will not only help me but the thousands of families that child interference effects.

Taran Champagne

Self Father

Austin, TX

My name is Taran Champagne, and I am in support of House Bill 969. Currently Texas Penal Code 25.03 is a joke of a law in Texas. Custody orders are minimally enforced in the state of Texas. Parents (mainly Fathers) can go years without seeing their child, because one parent has withheld the child for them. Parents are routinely told by the Police the Interference with Child Custody is a civil matter, when it is in fact a felony. Additionally odious to this, is should the parent get time back with their kid, they may be ordered to undergo reunification therapy. This is wholly the fault of a parent who withheld the child in violation of the court order in the first place.

One has to look no further than the Facebook Group "Official" Team Texas Penal Code 25.03 Interference with Child Custody to see how much of a problem it is. With over 2,367 members, people constantly ask questions on how they can get their child custody enforced.

I get it, no one wants to send a parent to jail because they fear it might be traumatic to the child. However, what is equally as traumatic is playing head game with the kid and keeping them from a fit and willing parent from whatever sick and twisted agenda the parent has.

By authorizing a civil penalty for failure to follow custody orders, local governments will have another tool to enforce custody orders. If individuals know there is a consequence for failing to follow those custody orders they may be more inclined to follow the orders as written. As it stands right now, there is almost no penalty, and kids are denied access to loving parents. This is harmful to the child, and we need to do something about this issue.

Please pass this bill immediately so it can become law and help our children.

Ayokunle Osagbami

George Saldana

Hutto, TX

My kids were pulled out from school and taken from me by sbtx and moved to another city and the judge in williamson county allowed here

Julie Campbell

Self

Waxahachie, TX

It shouldn't be so difficult for parents to see their children. Please pass this bill and make it less appealing for parents to withhold their children from each other.

Shawn Teel

Self

Lumberton, TX

I have resided in Texas and felt Texas was always fair when it comes to laws. Upon my separation from my soon to be exwife I learned else wise. My exwife was allowed in courts to lie about me being an abusive alcoholic with no evidence. Supervised visits were ordered which cost me an additional \$8,500 to fight. I won that battle after a year and half just for the mother to be allowed to alienated me from my four children. I am court ordered to drive 45 minutes to pick my children up while she drives 1 mile. My children refuse to leave with me based on what their mother tells/threatens them. I have it all on recording and police are notified/called each time. Due to it being civil they never enforce that my children go and the mother laughs/smiles each time my children get back in her car.

Making the mother legally reliable to send my children will help force her to send my children. If she has legal repercussions for her actions it will deter her. I would then be able to grow and establish/maintain the father/child bond. I would no longer make the long drive, waste gas and financially out of money for no children to come with me.

Alejandro Arrieta

self - ideation delivery lead

Carrollton, TX

I'm in support of this legislation. It will give tools to law enforcement and help to de-escalate situations between conservators.

ERICK RICHTER

self, small business owner

SAN ANTONIO, TX

I am in favor of HB 969 because I believe the counties and principalities that take it on, will suddenly have a financial incentive to actually enforce penal code 25.03 (Interference with Child Custody). As it presently stands, police typically say, "it's a civil matter; you can take your ex to court." However, a lot of parents don't have the money for lawyers, are tired of going to court and not getting help, and there is not a problem with their court orders; the problem is that the orders are not enforced. Offenders often will say, "The police will not do anything." HB 969 will change that. If the police can write a ticket, that will motivate their captains to encourage policies of enforcing 25.03. Offenders do not want to lose money. They will start telling their children that they need to go with their other parent during court ordered visitation times. As we all know, children are healthiest and are most likely to become good citizens when they can have a good relationship with both parents. I am an alienated parent who has had three of my children withheld from me for months (9 at the most) against court orders. I had 7 incident reports in Atascosa Co; the police leadership there just wouldn't do anything to help. I believe HB 969 will make a big difference. Please pass it! Thanks