I am the parent of a child who was taken from me. I carry that moment with me every single day.

When my child was removed, my husband and I were already asking for help. We were already working with services. We were not hiding, avoiding responsibility, or refusing support. We were doing the work we were told mattered. We believed that asking for help meant our family would be supported. Instead, it became the reason our family was torn apart.

The day my child was removed is a day I will never forget. No parent ever forgets the sound of their child crying, the confusion on their face, or the moment you realize you have no power to protect them from being taken away. There are no words that truly describe what it feels like to watch your child leave without understanding why, or to try to explain to them something you yourself cannot make sense of.

The trauma did not end when the door closed behind them. It followed us home. It followed us into our sleep. It changed how safe our home felt, how we trusted systems meant to help families, and how our child understood the world. The pain of that separation lives in our family every day.

What makes this even harder to accept is knowing that removal was not the only option. If the referral process described in House Bill 2243 had been in place at the time, my child may not have been taken at all. We could have been allowed to continue working with the services we were already engaged in. We could have received guidance, monitoring, and support without the devastation of separation.

Instead of help, we experienced loss.

This bill matters because it recognizes something families like mine learn too late: that intervention does not have to mean removal. That support does not have to come at the cost of a child's sense of safety or a parent's bond with their child. That families who are trying — truly trying — deserve a chance to heal together.

I cannot undo what happened to my family. But I can speak so that other families might be spared this pain. No child should have to wonder why they were taken when their parents were already asking for help. No parent should have to live with the knowledge that a different process could have kept their family intact.

I support House Bill 2243 with my whole heart, because it represents compassion, understanding, and the possibility of preventing unnecessary trauma. I hope you will pass this bill so fewer families have to live with the pain mine carries every day.

Thank you for listening to my truth.