

A CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND REFORM

Protecting Children and Families
During Prolonged Court Proceedings

A proposal for accountability, timely proceedings,
and the well-being of minor children

Submitted by Taylor Wahlers | Ohio



The Children Behind This Proposal

My name is Taylor Wahlers, and I am a mother of three minor boys: **Braxton, age 12; Brently, age 11; and Carter, age 7.** I am writing to call attention to the potential impact of prolonged court proceedings and family separation on children, their emotional well-being, and their relationships with one another.

Since November 10, 2025, my family has endured prolonged separation and uncertainty while my criminal case remains pending without a trial. No-contact restrictions involving my older sons and me have been in place through proceedings in Ottawa County Municipal Court and Ottawa County Common Pleas Court.

Carter and I have been separated from Braxton and Brently. As a result, all three brothers have been separated from one another in their everyday family lives, losing valuable opportunities for ordinary contact, shared experiences, and the comfort of growing up together.

Childhood continues to pass while these circumstances remain unresolved. Time spent together as a family cannot simply be returned later, and the potential emotional effects of prolonged separation deserve careful consideration. Children may not always have the words to explain what they are feeling. Stress and uncertainty can sometimes appear as sadness, anxiety, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, changes in academic performance, acting out, or conflict with peers. Some children may also be vulnerable to bullying or social isolation.

I believe this raises an important question beyond my own family: **How can Ohio better identify, monitor, and support children experiencing prolonged family separation during legal proceedings?**

I am not asking anyone to predetermine my case or bypass the legal process. I am asking that children's well-being remain visible while that process unfolds. Braxton, Brently, and Carter are three brothers whose relationships matter. Their names represent the children behind this proposal and the reason I believe these concerns deserve serious consideration.

The Human Impact of Delay

For months, I have submitted motions and sought answers regarding continued delays and the impact this situation is having on my children and our family. I have followed the court docket, contacted court clerks for procedural updates, and worked to navigate the process while helping my children and family endure the uncertainty.

My family has gone months without ordinary contact with Braxton and Brently. Important moments, everyday routines, and opportunities to maintain family bonds cannot simply be returned once a case is resolved. The emotional consequences of prolonged separation do not necessarily end when court proceedings do.

Questions for Ohio

What safeguards exist to identify and monitor cases in which prolonged court delays and no-contact restrictions may be having serious, ongoing consequences for minor children and their families? Is there a clearly defined process for flagging such cases, reviewing delays, and ensuring that the effects on children are not overlooked while proceedings continue?

Schools, Emotional Well-Being, and Early Support

Schools may be among the first places where changes in a child's emotional well-being or behavior become visible. When legally appropriate, and with strong safeguards for privacy, parental rights, and court orders, there should be a thoughtful way to help appropriate school personnel recognize that a child may be navigating significant family separation.

A child facing stress, grief, or uncertainty may experience sadness, withdrawal, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, declining school performance, anger, acting out, or conflict with peers. Some children may face bullying or social isolation. These outcomes are not inevitable, and no child should be labeled or presumed to have them. Early awareness may help educators and counselors respond with compassion rather than mistake signs of distress for simple misbehavior.

Any school-related process should share only necessary, legally permissible information, avoid stigma, and focus on support rather than drawing schools into court disputes. Appropriate staff could offer a confidential check-in, monitor educational needs, and connect children with school or community resources when warranted.

Why Reform Deserves Examination

My experience has led me to wonder how many other families may be enduring similar circumstances, losing months of meaningful time together while waiting for cases to move forward. I cannot speak for those families, but I believe this question is worth examining. Timely proceedings, appropriate review, and access to support may help reduce avoidable harm to children.

Proposed Safeguards

I respectfully ask Ohio to examine how it monitors cases involving prolonged separation of parents, siblings, and minor children, and to consider developing or strengthening a case-monitoring process that would:

- Flag cases involving minor children who are subject to prolonged no-contact restrictions.
- Identify significant delays that may be extending separation between children, parents, and siblings.
- Provide appropriate administrative review of case progress and unresolved matters.
- Encourage timely consideration of legally available review or modification procedures when circumstances warrant.
- Connect affected children and families with appropriate support services when needed.
- Explore privacy-conscious guidance for schools and child-serving professionals to support children experiencing significant family separation, when disclosure is legally permitted.
- Track relevant data to better understand the frequency, duration, and potential consequences of these circumstances.

Respect for Judicial Independence

Such a process would not dictate judicial decisions or interfere with judicial independence. Its purpose would be to promote accountability in case management, encourage timely proceedings, and ensure that the impact on children remains visible.

A Personal Appeal for Constructive Change

I am speaking as a mother who has experienced the fear, uncertainty, and heartbreak of prolonged separation from her children. I do not want another family to feel invisible while months pass without knowing when circumstances may change. I cannot change what my family has already endured, but I can use my experience to ask questions, seek answers, and advocate for meaningful improvements for future generations.

Request for Guidance

I respectfully request information about the appropriate department, office, or legislative body responsible for reviewing court-delay policies and child-welfare considerations in prolonged proceedings. I would welcome guidance on how to participate in policy discussions, submit a formal proposal, or work with others committed to protecting children and families affected by lengthy legal proceedings.

Conclusion

This is bigger than one case. It is about making sure that, while the legal system works to reach the right outcomes, the children living through that process are not forgotten. Children deserve consideration of their well-being, and families deserve transparency about the processes affecting their lives. Our state should continually examine whether its systems are doing everything reasonably possible to prevent avoidable harm.

I am ready to speak up, ask difficult questions, and work toward constructive change. I hope the appropriate people will be willing to listen.

Respectfully,

Taylor Wahlers

Ohio