

From: Office of the Governor Site Support
Sent: 1/16/2015 3:29:21 PM
To: Haley, Nikki
Cc:
Subject: Please help, as one mother to another

Title: Katherine Stephens
First Name: Katherine
Middle Initial:C
Last Name: Stephens
Suffix:
Street Address: 119 pugh rd
Street Address 2:
City: Little Mountain
State: SC
Zip: 29075
Phone: 8039209518

Email: kds803@att.net

Affiliation: South Carolina Resident
Message:
Governor Haley,

I am begging you to please help us. For quite some time my nieces have been in a bad home situation. The oldest is 13 and has a history of self harm. On November 2nd the girls were placed with me and they made my husband leave the house because he had a charge from 2002 for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. We explained the situation and I reached out to your office for help. Your office did request the agency to address the matter and in December they finally allowed my husband back home, but said he couldn't be unsupervised with the children. They girls were so happy and their lives were improving dramatically. However last week someone called Richland DSS and told them my husband had taken the girls to school alone, and they also made allegations of us smoking pot. I told DSS that those allegations were absurd, that I would take a drug test, and that we had personally been investigated by our local dss within the past year (this is the second time a mystery person has called dss to make false accusations against us) and all previous allegations were unfounded. Not only that, the assistant principal called dss several times and spoke to the supervisor to let her know that he had seen me in the car on the day in question. The caseworker was not there all week and knew nothing about it until today but she told me that it was already done, it doesn't matter if there was proof in our favor and, there was nothing I could do. She also told me to expect charges from my local office and that she would personally be contacting them to see about removing my own child from the home. These girls loves us and we love them. I have numerous people on my side, people willing to tell anyone who will listen that the children were better with us. Their grades have improved, their teachers say they have never been happier, and their attitudes in general are better. Cassidy, the oldest girl, has already attempted to kill herself in the past for fear of being separated from her family and attempted to do so again when she was taken to the children's home and separated from her younger cousins last night. I called the woman who took them and left her several messages trying to warn her that the oldest child was texting me and saying she would hurt herself, but she ignored my calls to the point where I actually called 911 and they had to find Cassidy and warn the people there that she was threatening to hurt herself. When Cassidy threatened to do so last night the woman taking her laughed at her. Had I not called 911 I fear dss would have yet another dead child on their hands.

I was told by Richland County dss to expect a phone call from newberry and they also said they would be pressing charges against my husband and I. Newberry County is trying to find out what they can, but they are a little baffled by the fact that Richland DSS presumed to tell me they would be coming go take my own child. I don't understand how Richland DSS received numerous accusations about the children in the past and did nothing then, but they can swokpl

honestly feel Richland Dss is abusing it's power. They have no proof the allegations are true and they even have proof that the kids were not unsupervised. The assistant principal called and left several messages confirming he had seen me, but they ignored his calls and went to court anyway to get an order to remove the girls from our home. I really don't understand how they can ignore serious allegations made in the past while the girls were still at home, but one person calls and says they didn't see me in the car one morning on the way to school (even though several other people did see me and called on our behalf to tell the agents they saw me) and that they think we have smoked pot before and DSS swoops in and takes the girls. They say they are looking out for the girls best interest but they only seem to be abusing their power. I have already contacted the media and plan to go public with this story. I was hoping to ask you for your help. I can't tell you how heartbroken we are or how much these girls mean to us . They are like our own children. Our 7 year old daughter loves her cousins and has been drawing pictures that say how much she hates dss for breaking up our family. I myself am a college student at Newberry for nursing. I have missed my first two days of school trying to handle this. My family comes first and those girls are family. There has to be something we can do, can you please find it in your heart to contact me. Just for a moment imagine that someone is threatening to take your children because of unfounded rumors (not to mention all the evidence confirming those rumors to be false). I really would like to speak with you, even if there's nothing you can do to help. We're willing to do anything to keep these girls with their family. I know you are a very busy woman and all I am is a young college student/mom, but it would comfort me to know that you are aware of the situation. I know DSS has been under the gun lately and I only want the agency to act in the best interest of the children, but I cannot see how removing them from a place where they have showed marked improvement is of any help. Since they came to live with us in November Richland DSS has repeatedly ignored my calls to ask for advice, assistance, and requests to speak with anyone in regards to helping the girls with things such as interviews, counseling, and any other issues that the girls asked me call about. I have even been calling my local DSS office where I have spoken to both the legal department and the head of Newberry DSS for advice. I highly commend Newberry DSS for their attempt to help my family, but Richland DSS seems to be a bunch of people who do a half-butt job just to get by without any regards for the lives they ruin. Please Ms. Haley, could you please at least send me a reply? Even if it's something you can't get involved in it would be nice to at least hear a word of comfort or two to be completely honest. Please, from one mother to another, I sincerely ask for just a few moments of your time. Thank you and have a blessed day.