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December 14, 2015

The Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Dear Governor Haley,

I am writing this letter with the hope of getting some answers as to why law enforcement and the Department of Social Services divisions have failed me and most importantly failed my children.

I am divorced and the mother of two children. My son is 13 years old and my daughter is nine. My son suffers from Autism, ADHD and severe anxiety. Shortly after the birth of our second child, my husband became abusive towards me and insisted on the use of corporeal punishment against our son due to his behavior. I was holding my daughter while he assaulted me by choking and hitting. Thank God my sister was there to pull him off or I would have fallen backwards off the porch. I managed to get both children in the car and fled. I called the police and he was arrested. I stayed with my parents for several weeks awaiting the court hearing while he stayed at our residence. At the hearing I was appalled that he pled guilty, was fined \$450 and ordered to attend anger management classes. Basically, the state made money off of me getting beat up. Where is the logic in this?

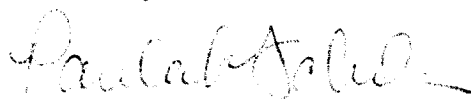
After years of abuse I contacted Sister Care for assistance. I was counseled with a psychiatrist there for several months before moving on to group sessions. I quickly became aware that most of the women there were court ordered to attend those sessions because they fought back against their abuser and they were arrested. This is very alarming. One good thing that came out of the sessions was finding out that they had a counselor for children. The counselor started coming to my residence to counsel my children on a weekly basis. On October 24, 2015 while the children were at their dad's house for the weekend, I receive a disturbing call from my daughter stating that her dad was hitting on her brother. While I was trying to make contact with their father, my daughter called 911. The police arrived and talked with everyone, wrote a report, left the children with their father and did not contact me as I am their primary custodial parent. While I was on my way over there, I received a call from the kids, and their

father, stating that everything was alright so I returned home. When I picked the kids up on Sunday after their visit they both expressed fear and stated that they were never going back over there again. Our next session with the counselor was already scheduled for the following day. In that session it was revealed that the children were threatened by their father if they told anyone about what happened. The counselor advised me that she was a mandated reporter so she reported the incident to DSS. I was relieved that the children would be protected.

Two weeks went by and I heard nothing. I called and found out that a case worker was assigned to the case and she would contact me, but she never did. I started making daily phone calls leaving her voice messages that were never returned. Meanwhile, I made up a story on the weekend of the children's next visitation with their father stating that the children were sick with the hope that DSS would step in to protect them. They never did. The case worker finally contacted me, but only after my son's developmental doctor also called and reported the incident because my son's anxiety level was dangerously elevated. Finally, after four weeks, DSS contacted their father to advise him they were investigating the incident. I only know this because he called me in a rage about the situation. Due to the inactions of the authorities, I had to retain the services of an attorney to schedule an emergency hearing to request suspended visitation in order to protect them. The hearing is scheduled for December 17.

I need to know what is the purpose of law enforcement and most importantly DSS? They certainly have not given my children the security and protection they need. Law enforcement was called and they came and went. DSS has done nothing to protect them. Now a Judge, who doesn't know us, will decide their fate in a 30 minute hearing. Both children are living with fear and anxiety on a daily basis. I'm trying to reassure them that everything will be alright but I feel I am lying to them. I am at a loss for how to explain this to them as I don't understand it myself. Please help by explaining this to me so I can confidently explain to them. I don't want my family to be another statistic like the Jones children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paula Schuler".

Paula Schuler