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28 January 2016

Honorable Nikki R. Haley
Governor
Office of the Governor
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Governor Haley:

My daughter, boyfriend, and I moved to Summerville, South Carolina from Norfolk, VA in the summer of 2014, looking for a fresh start. The past several years have been exceedingly hard on our family, especially regarding my daughter's biological father. We had heard nothing but positive stories from Charleston area residents; therefore, we moved without hesitation, hopeful and excited. And we were not disappointed! The Palmetto State has been a very positive change for us, especially regarding my daughter's elementary school.

However, as enriching as nearly all of the changes have been, one particularly important matter, my daughter's completely ignored child support case, has not only been a source of insurmountable frustration for us, but an embarrassment for South Carolina. I thought that The Commonwealth of Virginia handled many public matters with much disregard for their citizens (which is why we relocated), but I find that their Department of Child Support Enforcement was undeniably far more organized and efficient. This letter reaches you from an incredulous and frustrated parent and is an official inquiry into the inept, apathetic processes that plagues South Carolina's Department of Child Support.

My daughter, Kira, is almost ten. She is an amazing little girl with a bright future ahead. She has been accepted in the gifted program at Fort Dorchester Elementary and makes honor roll every quarter. She is an artist and loves to spend every minute she can playing outside. I am constantly complimented on what a treasure she is to everyone who knows her. When she was six months old, I discovered that her biological father, Michael G. Nadel, had involved himself in the current heroin epidemic sweeping through Delaware, as a user and dealer. I tried to help him at first, but I quickly learned that, in doing so, I was sacrificing our safety, health, financial security, and happiness. So I fled with my daughter and began the process of single parenting.

I have spent the time since carefully distancing us from him. I have been tirelessly present in court, and communicating with lawyers, GALs and state agencies to make sure my daughter is safe, happy, and cared-for and that my decisions, as the only responsible parent she has ever known, are protected. I have established sole legal and physical custody of Kira, and her biological father is not allowed any visitation privileges until he can prove to a judge that he drug free. In the meantime, the uninterrupted and legal court order for monthly child support is still in place. He has not only disregarded this years-old court order, but has taken a particular delight in evading such a broken system.

I delivered my application to the South Carolina Department of Child Support Services with ALL required documentation and a check for twenty-five dollars, as requested, in October 2014 when we established our permanent South Carolina residence. I notified Virginia (**Case no. 0004589369**) that I had moved and requested a state transfer to South Carolina as instructed by both states. I received no correspondence of any kind for months from South Carolina, and only then when I contacted the Department in frustration at their lack of progress and communication. Rest assured, Governor, that my check cleared immediately upon delivery.

Much to my dismay, there is no method of checking case status online, and there is no way to talk to your case manager in South Carolina! So I dealt with the call center 1-800-768-6779. This call center is a nightmare, full of apathetic and rude people. They have been so unhelpful and unprofessional, that it supersedes belief. I work in human services and still find each communication flabbergasting. Each time I call to request the status of my case, a call agent delivers a different reason why **ABSOLUTELY NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN ACHIEVED**. I have even been given completely farce updates like "the non-custodial parent is living in the state of Michigan," which he is not. One of the Charleston employees told me that the statewide call center agents are known for saying whatever they want and not to pay attention to what they say when they frustrate me. I'm not exactly sure what to even think about that. I am spoken to with flippant condescendence and usually a tone of annoyance from the call agents, IF I can even hear or understand them. Only once or twice has a living, breathing case manager returned my call. It has been nearly seventeen months,

Governor. Seventeen months of the dawdling and excuse-making. Believe me, I do understand that interstate cases take more time and are more complicated, but seventeen months is more than enough time to get a case registered in each state...especially when they have known where the non-custodial parents resides.

To add insult to injury, I only recently found out that the family court in Summerville has the incorrect arrearage balance listed. South Carolina has not included a single penny that was due when I had my case open in Virginia. I sent South Carolina a copy of the Virginia arrears, and Virginia is telling me that they, too, sent the balance. SC DCSE keeps telling me that they are not receiving paperwork from the other states, but when I called to ask VA to send me a copy of the balance on my case, I received paperwork in 3 days.

Just to give you an idea, the arrears balance from Virginia was \$16,215.12. Since my case has actually been registered here in April 2015 (Case no. 0906057), the arrears is over \$6000.00. Combined, the total arrears Kira is owed in support is over \$22,000.00! There is an additional court order from Virginia in March 2014 stating that he be incarcerated should he continue to neglect his financial responsibility. That has not been enforced. I sent all of this documentation to South Carolina in October 2014. The case isn't even registered in Delaware yet. He has a legal driver's license. He uses Delaware's Food Stamps Program. He receives free health care while he visits a methadone clinic every day because he has found a way to declare that he is disabled. My healthcare premium for me and my daughter is over \$500.00 a month. I find it disturbing that tax payers money is supporting such disgusting behavior, and a single working mom (working two jobs, finishing a degree, and NOT on any government assistance) can't even be spoken to with respect when trying to inquire about the status of a case.

This is not about the money, although my humble employment with a wonderful nonprofit agency does make me worry tremendously about finances. I want his legal rights terminated for obvious reasons. My daughter and I expect no sympathy, but we do expect results from SC DCSE. We are doing really fantastic and I have a wonderful boyfriend who has accepted us both and loves our family fiercely. This on-going situation however, is a shadow that looms over us daily, and darkens all that we are working so hard to accomplish. I'm tired of paying for court fees; I am tired of paying for lawyers; I am tired of wasting my time to follow up with SC DCSE to make sure they are doing their jobs; I'm tired of calling Virginia and Delaware to make sure they are following up with South Carolina. All I ask is that the information that I am providing be put where it needs to be, and that my case is being worked on by someone, and that the information is accurate.

I ask that this state treat our situation with the respect and attention that it deserves. I am trying to give my family the best shot at happiness and greatness that I can, and I feel like I'm being completely and utterly ignored. We would like to remain in South Carolina for the rest of our lives, but we need to see some serious action regarding this matter. I cannot spend the rest of my daughter's childhood fighting these legal battles when all we want is a name change. None of this should be this hard. My ultimate goal is that his legal rights be completely dissolved, and that Kira and I can finally change our last name together without jumping through court-hoops, or even worse, needing to get his permission to do so. I have kept my last name the same as my daughters because I don't want her to feel left behind with all of this trash. We are in this together and, although life has significantly improved, we both lived in a nightmare for many years that only most can imagine. I have always worked hard. I've always told my daughter that everything happens for a reason, even the bad stuff. I've always made sure that she knows that no matter what I'm going to protect, celebrate and love her. I didn't make it through all of this gracefully, but I did make it through. And I did it mostly on my own. And though my letter is vibrating with frustration, we are living colorful and happy lives now. I'm just ready for us to be Amanda and Kira Gendron, and not have to constantly look over my shoulder. I'm sure as a mother you can understand my distress and impatience with this giant speed bump.

I have little interest in trying to collect money from someone who cannot even take care of himself, but I do expect that justice be done. We cannot continue this drawn out process until my case accurately reflects our story.

I would appreciate any advice or assistance that you can provide. This is our most desperate hour.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda Nadel". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Amanda Nadel