

March 8, 2021

To Whom it may concern:

My name is Michelle Davenport, and I was invited to share some of the challenges I faced when looking to adopt four of my grandchildren. You will in the letter see that I refer to myself mostly because my husband is disabled and I truly was the only one doing all the ground work, research, all the steps needed to adopt my grandchildren, My husband does not drive and though he agreed to help me adopt them, his disabilities limited him with helping me. In 2014, four of my daughter Destiny's children entered foster care. My mother and I attended every hearing, attended every supervised visit, but my daughter continued to struggle with her addiction unfortunately in October 2015 the decision was made to terminate her rights to the four children. What was said to me in the courtroom, I will never forget. First, I was told that my rights as a grandmother also ended that day, and then the Judge said to me, "The only way you will see these children is if you adopt them". Besides the pain I was already feeling, and I did almost pass out, NO ONE except my daughter's public defender offered me any resources on the steps to adopt my grandchildren. So, the next day went to work shared with my director who was incredibly supportive that I needed two hours and she granted me that time, and I began my google search. The two lawyers that I spoke with said things were not done correctly and there should been a transfer of custody. Well because I did not know anything, I just accepted what was told to me. One Friday night at Church, a woman shared with me on Sunday she would bring some Adoption papers from an agency where she used to work. She did as she said, and she is the one that introduced me to Children's Home Society/Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota. I called right away that Monday morning and began the process my four grandchildren. Communication with Children's Home society began in November 2015, and it was amazing, and I was finally assigned a county worker that sent the referral, and the adoption classes were scheduled. My grandchildren at that time ages were 9, 7, 5, 3. The county in November of 2015 shared with my Children's Home society worker, my husband and I needed to plan to move before the adoption classes and before the home study process began. So right away in November 2015, I went to my Management Company Office to inform them of my families' situation and that my daughter parenteral rights were terminated. At the meeting they were so encouraging and said they would work with our family, and as we got closer to the end

of our lease they would move us to month to month and I left the meeting feeling encouraged. Well on Tuesday December 8, 2015, there was a letter outside my door from the Management Company and in the letter it reflected nothing we talked about in their office, we were told we would have to come up with \$ 1500.00 immediately by 12noon the next day (which of course we did not have) if we wanted to get out of the lease, the letter also referenced we would lose our security deposit and they would not change my lease to month to month. I was in shock to read that letter, but I continued looking for a new home anyway. In January 2015 we found a new home to rent and were approved January 13th, and we did meet the deadline before the adoption classes started which were January 15th and 16th. I cleared out all my savings accounts, took out a loan, put my student loans in forbearance, I maxed every one of my credit cards, and have borrowed money from friends all to meet my families expenses plus the moving expenses, and to pay rent for the two homes. My husband is on social security and most of the expenses fell on me, we had to pay utility bills in two homes an estimated \$ 400.00/month since February of 2016, we are also paid rent in two homes, and the rent total for both homes was \$ 2800.00. We paid this amount since February 2016. We moved into the new home on Saturday January 30th. The lease for the old home expired April 30th. The previous management company did not make any efforts to help my family at all. That home was empty since Saturday February 6th, 2016 when we moved everything to the new home. For the Moving expenses a friend lent me the money (\$500.00). I asked the county if there were vouchers for furniture since I was also told the house had to be completely furnished before the children could move in. I was also told by the county I could apply for a grant, but on top of the application it stated maximum income of \$100,000, but even though I made more than that, I thought I would be considered since I was adopting four children. Well, the decision was made and of course I was denied due to income. I shared with my director at work what was going on with my family and she along with her husband, My Pastor and his wife helped provide donations. We were blessed with four beds, but needed two mattresses, bedding etc. but made a way and we received everything we needed by the middle of February 2016. So now the house was fully furnished, we completed the adoption classes, we had an appointment in March 2016 to start the home study, but the kids were still not allowed to move in. I also had to get a new vehicle because I was driving a car, and it was not able to fit the entire family. So, February went by, March went by, April went by, May went by, finally I was told they could move in in June. So, my question still remains why did the county

make me move and suffer when I could have stayed in my home until the lease expired and be able to have my security deposit returned. I did appeal their decision and my deposit was eventually returned. 2014-2017 was an incredibly challenging time for our family but we are a Christian family and believed there would someday be help for our family. Though my family did not receive any financial support from the time my daughter's rights were terminated until the adoption was final on March 23rd, 2017, God supplied every need for my family. During this challenging time family/friends and church members bought food and paper products for my family. Some gave gift cards to help us survive and I am so grateful. It still saddens me that there may have been resource for my family and the county did not help my family. This experience has allowed me to share with other families wanting to adopt, you need at least \$ 10,000 or more in case one must move and need new vehicle. My faith in God helped me sustain during this time, I cried many days wondering why God, but I never gave up fighting to get my grandchildren. Please consider this letter as a guide to help future families. I survived and would not give up fighting, but some mothers, or grandmothers may not have that fight in them. Thank you for accepting this letter.

Respectfully submitted.

Michelle Davenport