

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.309

Reps. Hope, Breen, Dievendorf, Rheingans, Byrnes, Price and Wilson offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to declare November 2024 as Family Court
2 Awareness Month in the state of Michigan.

3 Whereas, The mission of Family Court Awareness Month is to
4 raise awareness about the importance of a family court system that
5 prioritizes child safety and acts in the best interests of
6 children. Family Court Awareness Month also aims to improve
7 recognition among court professionals, legislators, and the public
8 that family court decisions have profound and lasting impacts on
9 the lives of children and families, making it essential that these
10 decisions are informed by the latest research and best practices in
11 child safety; and

1 Whereas, An estimated 58,000 children in the U.S. are ordered
2 into unsupervised contact with abusive parents each year, resulting
3 in hundreds of child murders during visitation with a dangerous
4 parent. In Michigan, thirty-nine children have been killed by a
5 parent since 2008 during divorce or custody disputes; and

6 Whereas, In September 2021, 3-year-old Dylan Thebo was fatally
7 shot by his father in a murder-suicide during court-ordered
8 visitation in Kent County. Dylan's mother had made repeated efforts
9 to report her ex-husband's abuse and threats to six different
10 entities; and

11 Whereas, Kent County, Michigan, following six domestic
12 violence-related homicides within three months in 2021, recognized
13 the need for a specialized Domestic Violence Court. This court,
14 staffed by individuals knowledgeable about the intricacies of
15 domestic violence, aims to support victims and families, hold
16 offenders accountable, and prevent further homicides; and

17 Whereas, The mission of Family Court Awareness Month is to
18 promote judicial education and awareness about the necessity of
19 using scientifically validated, evidence-based treatment programs
20 that are proven to be safe and effective. This education for judges
21 and all professionals involved in family court cases should include
22 training on domestic violence, child abuse (emotional,
23 psychological, physical, and sexual), childhood trauma, coercive
24 control, and post-separation abuse; and

25 Whereas, FCAM is dedicated to educating judges and family
26 court professionals on the importance of incorporating evidence-
27 based, peer-reviewed research into their decision-making. This
28 includes the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study; Child Custody
29 Evaluators' Beliefs About Domestic Abuse Allegations; and Child

1 Custody Outcomes in Cases Involving Parental Alienation and Abuse
2 Allegations. This research reveals a prevalent gender bias against
3 mothers who report abuse in family courts, despite false
4 allegations being rare, and emphasizes the need for impartial
5 decision-making to protect children's well-being; and

6 Whereas, Family Court Awareness Month aims to encourage
7 collaboration among legislators, advocates, professionals, and the
8 community to improve family court practices, ensuring they are
9 guided by evidence-based research and prioritize the safety and
10 best interests of children; now, therefore, be it

11 Resolved by the House of Representatives, That the members of
12 this legislative body declare November 2024 as Family Court
13 Awareness Month in the state of Michigan.