

Commissioner Joette Katz
Connecticut Department of Children & Families
505 Hudson Street
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Commissioner Katz,

As members of the Connecticut General Assembly, we urge you not to assume custody and care of the Massachusetts case involving fifteen-year-old Justina Pelletier. Justina, her mother and father, and her three adult siblings are all residents of Connecticut.

Justina's parents secured medical care for their daughter from Dr. Mark Korson, a specialist in mitochondrial disease at Tufts Medical Center in Boston. In February of 2013, on the advice of Dr. Korson, the family took Justina to the emergency department at Boston Children's Hospital, hoping to see a doctor who had been treating the young girl for gastrointestinal problems. Without contacting her treating physician, a new doctor only seven months out of medical school examined Justina and changed her diagnosis from a physical to a psychological condition. When requested to sign a new treatment plan--which would remove her medications and preclude a second opinion—Justina's parents asked that their daughter be discharged and returned to Tufts. At that point, the hospital called in the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families; Justina has remained under the custody of the state since that time.

For the past thirteen months, Justina has been allowed to see her parents for only one hour a week, no clergy have been permitted to visit her, and she has been deprived of the education she was receiving in Connecticut before her admission to Boston Children's Hospital. In addition, Massachusetts DCF requested a gag order be imposed on her parents to prevent them from going to the media. After her father spoke to reporters, the department sought to have him held in contempt. At that point, Justina's parents obtained the services of a First Amendment lawyer; less than a week after that lawyer appeared in court, the department agreed to drop the contempt charge, dissolve the gag order, and return Justina's medical care to Tufts Medical Center and Dr. Korson.

In the face of legal opposition and media scrutiny, it now appears that Massachusetts DCF wants to back away from this case and restore Justina to the custody of her parents. We see no reason for the Connecticut Department of Children and Families to involve itself in a case which has been so thoroughly examined to so little effect. This distressing story should end with Justina at home in the care of her parents, and we hope you will not delay that resolution.

Very truly yours,

Joe Markley
State Senator
Sixteenth District