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Legal Writing Sample

**Proposed Georgia Legislation: Study Committee on Judicial
Process Integrity in Domestic Relations Proceedings**

This writing sample is an excerpt from legislation I independently developed and drafted, currently positioned for sponsorship in the 2027 Georgia Legislative Session. It demonstrates my ability to analyze complex legal and policy issues, synthesize statutory and constitutional considerations, and present them in a structured, persuasive format.

1 A RESOLUTION (by Victoria Coffelt)

2 Creating the Senate Study Committee on Parents and Nonparents Who Misuse the Judicial
3 System in Child Custody Proceedings, also known as the Alexander and Christopher Study
4 Committee; and for other purposes.

5 **WHEREAS**, sociopathic parents use children as pawns and to their financial advantages to
6 further abuse the other parent in child custody proceedings; and

7 **WHEREAS**, the Georgia House Shared Parenting Study Committee Report issued on December
8 31, 2006, stated that “testimony was presented during the committee meetings about how false
9 claims are at times used to try to gain leverage in custody proceedings. Testimony was also
10 presented that in numerous cases, abuse is not reported because of fear on the part of the one
11 who was abused”; and

12 **WHEREAS**, such Senate committee urged that a study be made to determine the amount of
13 abuse cases that might be false which are used for the purpose of gaining an “edge” in
14 proceedings and that the actions of attorneys in using false claims should also be studied. Just as
15 attorneys are gatekeepers for frivolous litigation, they should be gatekeepers for frivolous claims
16 regarding abuse. Sanctions should be utilized where an attorney actively proposes a false claim
17 for the purpose of giving his or her client a better chance of gaining custody; and

18 **WHEREAS**, the Georgia Child Support Commission’s responsibilities may need to be expanded
19 to include gathering data on child custody decisions; and

20 **WHEREAS**, it would be beneficial to study claims of abuse to determine if some are used for
21 leverage in child custody proceedings; and

22 **WHEREAS**, it would be beneficial to study whether or not governmental or quasi-governmental
23 entities prohibit acceptable access for a parent; and

24 **WHEREAS**, the Georgia Supreme Court may need to encourage the Judicial Qualifications
25 Commission to expand its rules to deal with judicial misconduct in the arena of child custody,
26 child support, and parenting time decisions; and

27 **WHEREAS**, studying ways to improve scrutiny, transparency, and accountability of judicial
28 officials and attorneys in proceedings involving abuse of procedure, frivolous litigation,
29 noncompliance with statutory child custody and child support mandates, identifying sociopaths,
30 narcissists, and all dynamics of family violence in domestic relations proceedings, and
31 identifying additional resources to assist the courts in accomplishing its mission to improve
32 public trust in the judicial system is a critical need; and

33 **WHEREAS**, research and testimony nationwide demonstrate that many forms of family
34 violence and abuse occur without physical injury, including coercive control, financial abuse,
35 psychological manipulation, litigation abuse, and interference with a parent-child relationship;
36 and

37 **WHEREAS**, coercive control consists of a patterned course of conduct designed to dominate,
38 isolate, intimidate, or entrap another parent through non-physical means, often continuing after
39 separation and escalating through misuse of child custody and child support proceedings; and

40 **WHEREAS**, financial abuse—including obstruction of access to marital or parental resources,
41 intentional depletion of assets, abuse of child support processes, and prolonged litigation
42 designed to financially exhaust the other parent—can impair a parent’s ability to provide
43 stability, safety, and care for a child; and

44 **WHEREAS**, many of these abusive behaviors align with elements identified in the nationally
45 recognized Power and Control Wheel, yet are not fully contemplated or defined within Georgia’s
46 current Family Violence Act; and

47 **WHEREAS**, courts, custody evaluators, and other professionals involved in domestic relations
48 proceedings may lack sufficient statutory guidance, training, or data necessary to identify
49 patterns of non-physical abuse, resulting in decisions that may unintentionally reward
50 manipulative or abusive conduct; and

51 **WHEREAS**, failure to recognize such patterns may contribute to prolonged litigation,
52 inconsistent rulings, increased conflict, erosion of public trust in the judicial system, and
53 outcomes that may place children and protective parents at continued risk; and

54 **WHEREAS**, the right of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children is a
55 fundamental right protected by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Georgia;
56 and

57 **WHEREAS**, our nation has historically relied first and foremost on parents to meet the real and
58 constant needs of their children; and

59 **WHEREAS**, the interests of children are best served when parents are free to make child-rearing
60 decisions about education, religion, and other areas of a child’s life without government
61 interference; and

62 **WHEREAS**, in 1972, the United States Supreme Court in *Wisconsin v. Yoder* held that “This
63 primary role of the parents in the upbringing of their children is now established beyond debate
64 as an enduring American tradition”; and

65 **WHEREAS**, in 2000, the United States Supreme Court in *Troxel v. Granville* produced six
66 different opinions on the nature and enforceability of parental rights under the United States
67 Constitution;

68 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE:**

69 **(1) Creation of Senate study committee.** There is created the Senate Study Committee
70 on Parents Who Misuse the Judicial System in Child Custody Proceedings.

71 **(2) Members and officers.** The committee shall be composed of five members of the
72 Senate to be appointed by the President of the Senate and two citizens to be appointed
73 by the study committee chairperson; provided, however, that one such member shall
74 be the chairperson of the Senate Judiciary Committee who shall serve as chairperson
75 of the study committee.

76 **(3) Powers and duties.** The committee shall undertake a study of the conditions, needs,
77 issues, and problems mentioned above or related thereto and recommend any action
78 or legislation which the committee deems necessary or appropriate.

79 In furtherance of this purpose, the committee shall also study:

- 80 1. The prevalence and impact of coercive control, financial abuse, psychological abuse,
81 litigation abuse, and post-separation abuse in child custody and child support
82 proceedings;
- 83 2. Whether existing Georgia statutes, including the Family Violence Act, adequately
84 address non-physical patterns of abuse that affect children, parental fitness, and the
85 integrity of judicial outcomes;
- 86 3. The intersection between false allegations of abuse and the failure to recognize
87 documented, ongoing patterns of coercive or controlling behavior;
- 88 4. Whether additional statutory definitions, judicial education, evidentiary standards, or
89 procedural safeguards are necessary to assist courts in identifying patterns of abuse rather
90 than isolated incidents;
- 91 5. Best practices from other jurisdictions regarding the recognition of coercive control and
92 financial abuse in domestic relations proceedings; and
- 93 6. The impact of such patterns on children’s long-term well-being, parental access, judicial
94 efficiency, and public confidence in the family court system.

95 **(4) Meetings.** The chairperson shall call all meetings of the committee. The committee
96 may conduct such meetings at such places and at such times as it may deem necessary
97 or convenient to enable it to exercise fully and effectively its powers, perform its
98 duties, and accomplish the objectives and purposes of this resolution.

99 **(5) Allowances, expenses, and funding.**

- 100 A. The legislative members of the committee shall receive the allowances
101 provided for in Code Section 28-1-8 of the Official Code of Georgia
102 Annotated.

103 B. Members of the committee who are not legislators, state officials, or state
104 employees shall receive a daily expense allowance in an amount the same as
105 that specified in subsection (b) of Code Section 45-7-21 of the Official Code
106 of Georgia Annotated, as well as the mileage or transportation allowance
107 authorized for state employees.

108 C. The allowances and expenses authorized by this resolution shall not be
109 received by any member of the committee for more than five days unless
110 additional days are authorized. Funds necessary to carry out the provisions of
111 this resolution shall come from funds appropriated to the Senate.

112 **(6) Report.** In the event the committee adopts any specific findings or recommendations
113 that include suggestions for proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file a report of
114 the same prior to the date of abolishment specified in this resolution, subject to
115 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

116 A. In the event the committee adopts a report that does not include suggestions
117 for proposed legislation, the chairperson shall file the report, subject to
118 subparagraph (C) of this paragraph.

119 B. No report shall be filed unless the same has been approved prior to the date of
120 abolishment specified in this resolution by majority vote of a quorum of the
121 committee.

122 C. A report so approved shall be signed by the chairperson of the committee and
123 filed with the Secretary of the Senate.

124 D. In the absence of an approved report, the chairperson may file with the
125 Secretary of the Senate a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the
126 committee in lieu thereof.

127 **(7) Abolishment.** The committee shall stand abolished on December 1, 2026.