

# HOUSE RESOLUTION NO.309

Reps. Hope, Breen, Dievendorf, Rheingans, Byrnes, Price, Wilson, Bezotte, Glanville, Liberati and Witwer 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

1 child safety; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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