

Teen Ripped Away From Family After Disagreement Over Medical Diagnosis

A Connecticut couple sobbed outside a Boston courtroom after a legal setback in their yearlong battle to regain custody of their daughter.

The state of Massachusetts took charge of Justina Pelletier as her parents and doctors at Children's Hospital continue to clash over her diagnosis and treatment. The teen's mom broke down in court. Paramedics wheeled Linda Pelletier from the courthouse Monday afternoon minutes after she collapsed upon hearing a judge order her embattled teenaged daughter into foster care.

"This child has been ripped away from this family," Rev. Patrick Mahoney of the Christian Defense Coalition says.

A year ago, Justina Pelletier was still ice skating as she underwent treatment for mitochondrial disease—a rare and controversial disorder where the body's cells can't produce energy, triggering chronic fatigue and severe digestive problems.

Gordon Russell's wife died from it. "This girl is in trouble," he says. "And we are all standing around watching her deteriorate."

Trouble began when the Pelletiers brought Justina into the Children's Hospital ER last February, where they say doctors quickly cast aside her diagnosis, instead concluding her problems were of psychiatric origin.

When the Pelletiers objected, Children's brought in the Department of Children and Families, and the state took

custody of Justina, essentially ruling her parents were committing child abuse by pursuing medical rather than mental health treatment.

“They see their daughter suffering and in pain, and they are not able to do something about it, so that has obviously taken a toll on the family,” says Mat Staver of Liberty Counsel.

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