

Pushed Out

Why Women Don't Lose in Court—They're Forced Out Before
Justice Begins

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Dedication

To Christy Orr,

my Lieutenant Governor running mate— a survivor who
understands firsthand

what it means to face a system that doesn't work, and who
continues to stand for women who need it to.

There is no freedom until women and men are equal under the
law.

The problem is the system filters who can access justice.

Most women don't lose in court—they never get a fair chance to
stay in it.

Chapter 1: The System You Walk Into

In Marion County, a mother sits in her car outside the courthouse, engine still running.

She has already taken the day off work. She is already behind on bills. Her kids are at school, and she has exactly one chance to get this right before she has to pick them up.

She is not a lawyer. She has never filed anything in court before. She is here because something in her life is not safe—and she needs the system to work.

She walks inside.

What happens next will not just depend on what is true.

It will depend on whether she can survive the system long enough to prove it.

Most people believe the court system is where problems get solved.

Where truth is examined. Where fairness is applied. Where the right outcome eventually rises to the top.

That belief matters.

But it is not how the system actually works for many women in Ohio.

Most women don't lose in court.

They never get a fair chance to stay in it.

This is not about bad people.

It is not about a single judge, a single lawyer, or a single case.

It is about the structure of the system itself.

Because what determines outcomes is not just:

what happened

what is fair

what is needed

It is whether someone can:

stay long enough

afford long enough

understand enough

to reach a final decision.

There is no freedom until women and men are equal under the law.

But equality under the law does not just mean the rules are written the same.

It means the system is usable.

It means a woman can:

enter

stay

be heard

and reach an outcome that actually works in real life

Right now, for too many women in Ohio, that is not what happens.

Instead, something else happens.

Pressure builds.

Time stretches. Costs rise. The process becomes harder to understand.

And slowly, quietly, the system begins to filter people out.

Not all at once.

Step by step.

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

A missed form. A delayed hearing. A bill that cannot be paid. A day of work that cannot be missed again.

Each one seems small.

Together, they decide who gets to stay in the process—and who does not.

The mother who walked into that courthouse is not thinking about systems.

She is thinking about her children.

She is thinking about safety.

She is thinking about stability.

But what she is about to experience is not just a legal process.

It is a system of pressure.

And that pressure will shape what she is able to ask for, how long she can pursue it, and what she ultimately accepts.

If she had unlimited time, unlimited money, and perfect understanding of the system, her case might look very different.

But she does not.

And neither do most women who walk into that building.

That is the reality this book is about.

Not theory.

Not ideology.

Reality.

This book is not about how courts are supposed to work.

It is about how they actually work—and why.

It is about understanding the forces that shape outcomes:

time

cost

complexity

access

And how those forces interact to determine who gets justice—and who does not.

If you have ever felt like the system was working against you, you are not alone.

And more importantly—

you are not wrong.

The system was never built to keep you in.

It was built to process cases—not protect people.

That distinction matters.

Because once you understand it, something changes.

You stop asking:

“Why is this happening to me?”

And you start seeing:

“How is this system producing this outcome?”

That shift is the beginning of clarity.

And clarity is the beginning of change.

If you've lived this, you already understand more about this system than most people making decisions about it.

That matters.

Because that means you are not just someone affected by the system.

You are someone who can help change it.

This book will not tell you that the system is broken in one place.

It will show you how it works—across the entire process.

Step by step.

So you can see clearly:

where pressure comes from

how decisions shift

why outcomes change

And what it would take to build something better.

Because once you can see the system—

you are no longer inside it blindly.

You are looking at it.

And that is where change begins.

Chapter 2: What the System Actually Does

The mother in Marion County made it inside.

She found the clerk's window. She asked for the right forms. She started filling them out.

Line by line. Box by box.

Trying to translate her life into something the system could understand.

She is not thinking about legal strategy.

She is thinking:

“Did I fill this out right?” “Is this enough?” “What happens if I get this wrong?”

At this stage, nothing has been decided.

No judge has ruled. No argument has been made.

And yet, the system is already shaping the outcome.

Most people think courts decide cases.

That is only partially true.

Courts don't just decide outcomes.

They shape what outcomes are even possible.

Most women don't lose in court.

They never get a fair chance to stay in it.

What determines that is not just the facts.

It is the process.

The System Is a Process, Not a Moment

People imagine court as a single event.
A hearing. A decision. A final outcome.
But that is not how it works.

The system is a sequence:

filing

responding

waiting

appearing

complying

Each step matters.

Each step adds pressure.

And each step determines whether you can continue.

The outcome is not just decided at the end.

It is shaped the entire way through.

Every Step Has a Cost

The mother in Marion County finishes her paperwork.

Now she has to file it.

There is a fee.

Then there is time off work for the hearing.

Then childcare.

Then transportation.

Then more waiting.

Nothing has gone wrong.

And yet, something is already happening.

The system is adding weight.

Every step requires something:

time

money

attention

energy

And every requirement takes something away.

This is where the process starts to matter more than the facts.

Because the process determines whether you can keep going.

The System Doesn't Remove People All at Once

It would be obvious if it did.

If someone walked in and was told:

“You cannot continue.”

But that is not how it works.

It happens gradually.

A delay here. A cost there. A form that is harder than expected.

Each step seems manageable on its own.

Together, they create pressure.

That pressure builds.

And over time, it forces decisions.

Pressure Changes Outcomes

At the beginning, the mother knows what she needs.

She knows what is safe. She knows what her children need.

But as the process continues, something shifts.

Not in the facts.

In what she can sustain.

Waiting creates risk. Costs create limits. Confusion creates hesitation.

Eventually, the question changes.

It is no longer:

“What is the right outcome?”

It becomes:

“What outcome can I survive?”

That is the moment the system starts deciding the case.

This Isn't Random

This pattern is not unique.

It happens every day across Ohio.

Different counties. Different judges. Different cases.

Same outcome pattern.

Because it is not driven by individuals.

It is driven by the structure.

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

The Filter Is Already Working

The mother in Marion County will make it to her first hearing.

Many do.

But what happens after that is not guaranteed.

More filings. More time off work. More costs. More decisions.

At each stage, the filter tightens.

Not because someone decided to exclude her.

Because the system requires more than most people can give for long enough.

What This Means

If you have felt like the system was working against you, that feeling has a cause.

It is not confusion.

It is not failure.

It is structure.

The system is not just evaluating your case.

It is evaluating your ability to stay in it.

And that changes everything.

Because once you understand that, you stop asking:

“Why is this so hard?”

And you start seeing:

“This is how the system works.”

What Comes Next

Now that you can see the system as a process—not a single decision—you can begin to see where it breaks.

Not in one place.

But in patterns.

In the next chapter, we will make those patterns clear.

We will break the system down into four failure points:

time

cost

complexity

access

Because once you can name where the system fails—
you can begin to understand how to change it.

Chapter 3: The Four Failure Points

The mother in Marion County made it through the first step.

She filed the paperwork. She got a hearing date.

For a moment, it feels like the system is working.

But the system is not decided in moments.

It is shaped over time.

And what happens next will not depend on just one thing.

It will depend on four.

Time. Cost. Complexity. Access.

These are not separate problems.

They are connected.

And together, they form the filter.

How the Filter Works

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

Time, cost, complexity, and access are not isolated issues.

They are pressures.

Each one narrows who can stay in the process long enough to be heard.

Most women don't lose in court.

They never get a fair chance to stay in it.

The filter does not remove people all at once.

It removes them gradually.

Step by step.

Decision by decision.

Until what remains is not just the truth—

but what survived the system.

Failure Point 1: Time

The hearing is scheduled weeks out.

Maybe longer.

In the meantime, nothing is resolved.

Life continues.

Work continues. Bills continue. Stress continues.

Time is not neutral.

It creates pressure.

The longer a case takes, the harder it becomes to maintain your position.

Waiting changes decisions.

Not because the facts change.

Because reality keeps moving while the system stands still.

Failure Point 2: Cost

Each step requires something.

Filing fees. Time off work. Childcare. Gas. Legal help.

The mother in Marion County starts to feel it.

Not all at once.

But steadily.

At first, it feels manageable.
Then it becomes a calculation.
“Can I afford to keep going?”
Cost doesn’t just limit options.
It reshapes them.

Failure Point 3: Complexity

The system is not simple.

Forms. Rules. Deadlines. Legal language.

Nothing is explained clearly.

And everything matters.

A missed detail. A wrong form. A late response.

Any one of these can weaken a case.

Not because it lacks truth.

Because it lacks precision.

Failure Point 4: Access

Access is what remains after the first three.

If time stretches too far— If cost rises too high— If complexity
becomes too much—

Access disappears.

Not suddenly.

Quietly.

A missed hearing. A form never filed. A decision to stop.

The case continues.

But without full participation.

And when that happens, the outcome changes.

How the Failures Combine

These four forces do not operate alone.

They reinforce each other.

Time increases cost. Cost limits access. Complexity increases mistakes. Mistakes create delays.

The cycle builds.

The mother in Marion County starts to feel it.

She is not just managing a case anymore.

She is managing pressure.

And pressure changes decisions.

Where the Case Is Really Decided

Most people think cases are decided in the courtroom.

They are not.

They are decided in the weeks before.

In the decisions people are forced to make just to stay in the process.

What to file. What to pursue. What to give up.

By the time a final decision is made, the outcome has already been shaped.

Not just by the facts.

But by what survived the filter.

What This Means

If you have felt like the system was working against you, that feeling has a cause.

It is not random.

It is not personal.

It is structural.

The system is not just asking:

“What happened?”

It is asking:

“Who can stay?”

And that question determines more than anything else.

What Comes Next

Now that you can see the four failure points, the next step is to understand each one more deeply.

Not as abstract ideas.

As forces.

Because once you understand how each one works, you can begin to

see:

where pressure builds

how decisions shift

why outcomes change

In the next chapter, we start with the first force:

Time.

Because time is not just a delay.

It is what everything else builds on.

Chapter 4: Time – The Hidden Force

Time does more damage in the court system than most women realize.

Not because it exists.

But because of what it does while you wait.

Time Is Not Neutral

In everyday life, time passing is normal.

In Ohio Domestic Relations Court, time passing changes outcomes.

Every delay adds pressure. Every rescheduled hearing adds uncertainty. Every extra week forces decisions you would never have made otherwise.

Time is not just something that happens in your case.

It is something that acts on your case.

What Time Does to You

When a case drags on, you are not just waiting.

You are living inside the wait.

That can mean:

staying in a situation that is not safe

managing housing that feels one paycheck from falling apart

trying to explain uncertainty to your children while keeping them stable

carrying stress that does not go away

Time stretches the problem.

The longer it stretches, the harder it becomes to hold your ground.

What Time Does to Decisions

At the beginning, most women know exactly what they are asking for.

What is safe. What is fair. What their children need.

But over time, those positions shift.

Not because you were wrong.

Because time makes them harder to sustain.

Waiting increases:

financial pressure

emotional fatigue

risk

Eventually, the goal changes.

It becomes less about the best outcome and more about an outcome you can survive.

Delay Becomes Leverage

Time does not affect both sides the same way.

The person with more resources can:

wait longer

absorb costs

handle delays

The person with fewer resources cannot.

That imbalance turns time into leverage.

A hearing gets pushed back. A continuance gets requested. A process gets extended.

Each delay increases pressure on the woman who cannot afford to keep waiting.

And eventually, that pressure produces a result—
not because the case was fairly decided, but because the situation became unsustainable.

The System Runs on Delay

This is not always intentional.

Courts are busy. Dockets are full. Schedules are limited.

But the effect is the same.

The system moves slower than the problems it is supposed to solve.

Bills still come due. Work still demands your time. Children still need stability right now.

The system pauses.

Life does not.

Temporary Becomes Permanent

In many cases, temporary decisions are made early.

Temporary custody arrangements. Temporary support orders.

Temporary protection orders.

These are meant to hold things in place while the case moves forward.

But when time stretches, temporary becomes reality.

Children adjust to the schedule. Living situations settle around the

interim order. Patterns form.

By the time a final decision arrives, the “temporary” situation has already shaped the outcome.

Not because it was the best option.

Because it lasted the longest.

Case Study: United States v. Microsoft Corp. — When Time Changes the Outcome

This case took years to resolve.

During that time, the entire landscape changed. Competitors shifted. The market moved. The original problem no longer looked the same by the end.

The system produced a result.

But the result applied to a different reality than the one the case started in.

This is exactly what happens in Ohio family court.

A custody case filed because of safety concerns can drag on for months or longer.

Children grow. Living situations change. Daily life moves forward.

By the time a final decision is made, the situation that started the case has already evolved.

The system eventually rules—

but the world you and your children are living in has already changed.

What This Means for You

If you are in the system, time is not something you can ignore.

It is something you have to account for.

Delays are not just frustrating.

They are shaping your options.

Every week matters. Every postponement matters. Every extension matters.

Not because of the calendar—

but because of what changes while you wait.

What Comes Next

Now that you understand how time works inside the system, the next step is to look at the second force working alongside it:

Cost.

Because time and cost are connected.

As time increases, cost increases.

And together, they shape what is possible for women in Ohio who need the system to work.

Chapter 5: Cost — When Justice Becomes a Tradeoff

The mother in Marion County made it to her hearing.
She stood in front of a judge. She answered questions. She tried
to explain what was happening in her life.
For a moment, it feels like progress.
Like something is finally moving.
But the hearing is not the end.
It is just another step.
And every step comes with a cost.

Cost Starts Quietly

At first, cost does not feel overwhelming.
A filing fee. A day off work. Gas to get to the courthouse.

Each one seems manageable.
But the system is not one step.
It is many.
Another hearing. Another missed shift. Another bill. Another
arrangement for childcare.
The cost builds.
Not all at once.
But steadily.
And eventually, it becomes something else.
Pressure.

Cost Is Not Just Money

Most people think cost means attorney fees.

But in Ohio Domestic Relations Court, cost is broader than that.

It includes:

lost income

childcare

transportation

time away from responsibilities

emotional energy

Every step requires something from you.

And every requirement takes something away.

You are not just paying with money.

You are paying with stability.

The Question Changes

At the beginning, the mother in Marion County knew what she needed.

What was safe. What her children needed. What outcome made sense.

But now, the question is different.

It is no longer:

“What is right?”

It is:

“What can I afford to keep fighting for?”

That shift changes everything.

Cost Shapes the Outcome

Cost does not just limit options.

It reshapes them.

A mother may know her child needs a different custody arrangement.

But if pursuing it means:

more missed work

more legal expenses

more instability

the calculation changes.

Not because she is unsure.

Because she has limits.

And the system forces her to make decisions inside those limits.

Time and Cost Work Together

Cost does not grow on its own.

It grows with time.

Every delay adds:

another expense

another disruption

another decision

Time creates pressure.

Cost makes that pressure harder to carry.

Together, they tighten the filter.

The Filter Is Doing Its Work

The mother in Marion County is still in the process.

But it is harder now.

She is tracking expenses. She is managing work. She is trying to hold everything together.

And every additional step is asking the same question:

“How much longer can you do this?”

That question—not the facts—is starting to shape the outcome.

Most women don't lose in court.

They get filtered out before justice ever reaches them.

Unequal Cost Creates Unequal Outcomes

Cost does not affect both sides equally.

The person with more resources can:

hire representation

respond faster

absorb delays

continue longer

The person with fewer resources cannot.

The system assumes both sides can participate equally.

In reality, they cannot.

And when participation is unequal, outcomes follow that imbalance.

The Hidden Cost of Doing It Alone

Many women try to handle their case without an attorney.

Not because they want to.

Because they have to.

But doing it alone carries its own cost:

time spent learning the system

increased risk of mistakes

added stress from managing everything

What is saved in money is often paid in:

lost time

weaker positioning

higher risk

This is not a free option.

It is a tradeoff.

Where the Case Starts to Shift

The mother in Marion County has not lost her case.

But something is changing.

She is starting to consider options she would not have considered at the beginning.

Not because they are better.

Because they are possible.

That is how cost shapes outcomes.

What This Means

If you have felt like decisions became harder over time, there is a reason.

It is not just stress.

It is structure.

The system is not just evaluating your case.

It is evaluating your ability to sustain it.

And cost is one of the primary ways it does that.

What Comes Next

Time and cost work together.

But they are not the only forces shaping outcomes.

The next failure point is the one that makes everything harder to navigate:

Complexity.

Because when a system becomes too complex, even strong cases begin to break down.

And when that happens, outcomes drift further away from the truth.

Chapter 6: Complexity – Where Truth Dies

The mother in Marion County is still in the process.

She has made it through filing. She has made it through her first hearing.

She is still trying to do everything right.

But now the system starts to change.

It becomes harder to follow.

The System Gets Harder to Understand

At first, the process felt straightforward.

Fill out forms. Show up. Explain what is happening.

Now it feels different.

There are more documents. More deadlines. More instructions that are not fully explained.

Words start appearing that she has never used before:

Motion. Affidavit. Continuance. Jurisdiction.

Each one matters.

But none of them are clearly defined for her.

She is no longer just telling her story.

She is trying to translate it into a language she does not speak.

Precision Replaces Clarity

The system is built for precision.

Not clarity.

Every detail matters:

how something is written

when it is filed

what is included

what is left out

A small mistake is no longer small.

A missed detail. A wrong form. A late response.

Each one can change how her case is seen.

Not because the truth changed.

Because the system requires precision most people were never given.

The Filter Tightens

Time created pressure. Cost created limits.

Complexity creates risk.

The mother in Marion County is now managing all three.

She is trying to:

understand the process

avoid mistakes

keep up with deadlines

while still:

working

caring for her children

holding everything together

The filter is tightening.

Not in one moment.

But in every step.

Mistakes Become Outcomes

In most areas of life, mistakes can be fixed.

In this system, they can follow you.

A form filed incorrectly. A response that does not include the right language. A deadline missed by a day.

These do not just create setbacks.

They shape outcomes.

Because what gets seen, what gets considered, and what moves forward depends on how well something fits the system.

Not just whether it is true.

Doing It Alone Becomes Harder

The mother in Marion County is still handling this without a lawyer.

Not because she wants to.

Because she has to.

But the deeper she gets into the process, the harder that becomes.

Every step now requires:

more understanding

more precision

more time

What started as manageable is becoming overwhelming.

And the risk of getting something wrong is increasing.

Where Truth Starts to Drift

At the beginning of the case, the focus was clear:

What happened. What is safe. What her children need.

Now something else is happening.

The outcome is starting to depend on:

what was filed correctly

what was included

what was missed

what was understood

Truth is still there.

But it is no longer enough on its own.

Because the system does not just evaluate reality.

It evaluates how well reality is presented inside its structure.

This Isn't Random

This happens every day.

Across counties. Across cases. Across different situations.

Not because people are trying to make it harder.

Because the system is built this way.

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

And complexity is one of the ways it filters people out.

The Breaking Point Is Coming

The mother in Marion County is still in the process.

But it is harder now than it has been at any point before.

She is balancing:

time pressure

financial strain

increasing complexity

And something is approaching.

Not a decision.

A breaking point.

What This Means

If the system feels confusing, that is not a personal failure.

It is a design issue.

You are navigating something that was not built to be easily understood.

And that matters.

Because when a system is hard to understand, it becomes hard to use.

And when it becomes hard to use, people begin to fall out of it.

What Comes Next

Time created pressure. Cost created limits. Complexity created risk.

Now those forces come together.

In the next chapter, we reach the final failure point:

Access.

Because when time is too long, cost is too high, and complexity becomes too much—
people do not just struggle in the system.
They disappear from it.

Chapter 7: Access – Who Gets Left Out

The mother in Marion County is still in the process.

But just barely.

She has made it through delays. She has absorbed the cost. She has tried to keep up with the complexity.

And now everything is coming together.

Access Is What Remains

Access is not the beginning of the system.

It is what is left after everything else.

If time stretches too long— If cost rises too high— If complexity becomes too much—

Access disappears.

Not all at once.

Quietly.

The System Doesn't Tell You When You're Out

There is no moment where someone says:

“You no longer have access to the system.”

Instead, it happens like this:

A hearing you cannot attend because you cannot miss work again. A form you do not submit because you are not sure how to complete it. A deadline that passes while you are trying to keep everything together.

Each moment feels small.

Together, they remove you from the process.

This is how the filter works.

Most Women Don't Lose in Court

They never get a fair chance to stay in it.

The Decision Before the Decision

The mother in Marion County has a choice.

Keep going.

Or stop.

Not because her case is weak.

Not because the facts changed.

Because the cost is too high. Because the process is too much.

Because the pressure has built for too long.

She signs an agreement.

Not because it is safe. Not because it is fair.

Because she cannot afford to keep going.

The Case Didn't End—She Did

The system didn't fail to hear her.

It required more than she could survive.

The system will record an outcome.

It will show:

a resolution

an agreement

a closed case

On paper, everything looks complete.

But the outcome does not reflect the full truth.

It reflects who was able to stay.

This Is Where the System Fails

Not in one moment.

Not in one decision.

Across the entire process.

Time created pressure. Cost created limits. Complexity created risk.

And all of it led here.

Access disappeared.

The Filter Is Complete

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

And access is the final stage of the filter.

It determines:

who remains

who is heard

whose reality becomes the outcome

Everyone else is removed.

Quietly.

This Happens Every Day

Different counties. Different judges. Different cases.

Same pattern.

Women walk in needing the system to work.

Many never make it all the way through.

Not because they are wrong.

Not because they do not care.

Because the system requires more than most people can give for long enough.

What This Means

If you have ever felt like the system pushed you out, that feeling is real.

You were not imagining it.

The system was not designed to keep you in.

It was designed to process cases—not protect people.

And once you see that, something changes.

You stop blaming yourself.

You start seeing the structure.

The Full Picture

Now you can see it clearly:

Time creates pressure

Cost creates limits

Complexity creates risk

Access determines who remains

This is not random.

This is how the system works.

What Comes Next

Now that you can see the full system, the next step is different.

Not just understanding.

Design.

Because this is not an unsolvable problem.

It is a design problem.

And in the next chapter, we begin to rebuild.

Chapter 8: The System Model — How Justice Actually Works

The mother in Marion County is no longer in the system.
Her case is closed.

On paper, everything looks complete.
There is an outcome. There is an agreement. There is a record.
But if you look closer, something is missing.
The outcome does not fully match reality.
Not because no one cared.
Not because the law failed.
Because the system produced a result under pressure.

This Is How the System Actually Works

Up to this point, you have seen the pattern:
Time creates pressure. Cost creates limits. Complexity creates risk. Access determines who remains.
That is not random.
It is structure.
And once something has structure, it can be understood.

A Simpler Way to See It

Most people are taught to see courts as:
legal
moral

procedural

But those descriptions don't explain what actually happens.

There is a simpler way to see it:

Every court system is a machine that takes in real-life situations and produces outcomes under pressure.

And that machine follows a pattern.

The Model

You can describe that pattern like this:

$$C = F \cdot R / S$$

Where:

C (Coherence) = how well the outcome matches real life

F (Force) = the system's ability to enforce decisions

R (Structure) = rules, procedures, and processes

S (Strain) = time, cost, and complexity combined

You do not need to remember the equation like math class.

You only need to see what it does in your life.

What Happens When Strain Increases

When strain is low, the system works better.

People can:

stay in the process

present their situation clearly

pursue the outcome they actually need

But when strain increases, everything changes.

Time stretches. Costs rise. Complexity increases. And slowly, coherence drops.

The outcome stops matching reality.

That is what happened to the mother in Marion County.

The system produced a result.

But that result reflects what survived the process—

not what was true at the beginning.

The Filter and the Model Are the Same Thing

The filter you've seen throughout this book is not separate from the system.

It is how the system operates under strain.

When strain rises:

fewer people can stay

more pressure builds

outcomes shift

That is the filter in action.

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

Force Alone Doesn't Fix It

The system has power.

It can issue orders. It can enforce decisions.

But force alone does not create good outcomes.

If the system is strained, force can enforce the wrong result:

an unsafe custody arrangement

an unrealistic support order

an agreement made under pressure

Force ensures compliance.

It does not ensure correctness.

Structure Determines What Is Possible

Structure is the path the system forces you to follow.

Forms. Rules. Timelines. Procedures.

If that structure is simple, people can move through it.

If it is complex, people break down inside it.

This is where most systems fail.

Not because there are no rules—

but because the rules do not match real life.

What a Functional System Looks Like

When the system is balanced, everything changes.

Strain is reduced. Structure is simplified. Force is applied correctly.

And coherence increases.

Outcomes begin to match reality again.

People can:

stay in the system

be heard

reach decisions that actually work in daily life

The system does not have to be perfect.

It has to be usable.

This Is a Design Problem

What you have seen in this book is not a failure of intention.

It is a failure of design.

The system was built to process cases.

Not to protect people navigating real life.

And that design creates the filter.

But design can change.

What This Means for You

If the system has not worked for you, that does not mean it cannot work.

It means the forces inside it are out of balance.

And now you can see them clearly.

You can see:

where pressure is coming from

why decisions shift

how outcomes are shaped

You are no longer inside the system blindly.

You are looking at it.

What Comes Next

Understanding the system is not the end.

It is the beginning.

Because once you understand the structure—

you can redesign it.

In the next chapter, we move from understanding to action.

We begin building a system that actually works.

Chapter 9: Designing a Court That Works

Now you can see it.

The system is not random. It is not unpredictable.

It is structured.

Time creates pressure. Cost creates limits. Complexity creates risk. Access determines who remains.

And together, they form the filter.

If It's Designed, It Can Be Redesigned

The system you've seen was built over time.

Layer by layer. Rule by rule. Process by process.

That means one thing:

It can be changed.

Not by tearing everything down.

But by redesigning how it works in real life.

Start With the Right Goal

Most systems are designed around process.

Rules. Procedures. Consistency.

But that is not the goal.

The goal is simple:

A system where women can:

enter

stay

be heard

reach outcomes that actually work in daily life

If a system cannot do those four things, it is not working.

No matter how correct it looks on paper.

Design for Reality, Not Theory

The current system assumes ideal conditions:

unlimited time

available money

understanding of the process

emotional capacity to endure it

Most women do not have those conditions.

A functional system starts from reality:

limited time

limited money

high stress

children who need stability now

If a system only works when everything goes right—

it does not work.

Reduce Strain First

From the model:

$$C = F \cdot R / S$$

If you want better outcomes, you don't start by adding more rules.

You reduce strain.

That means:

faster timelines

lower costs

simpler processes

When strain drops:

people stay in the system longer

mistakes decrease

outcomes improve

This is not theory.

This is how systems behave.

What That Looks Like in Practice

A system that works in Ohio would look different immediately.

1. Time That Matches Reality

Hearings scheduled in weeks, not months

Real limits on unnecessary continuances

Priority handling for custody and protection-order cases

Urgency should be treated as urgency.

2. Processes People Can Actually Use

Step-by-step filing paths in plain language

Fewer forms, standardized across counties

Clear instructions at every stage

No one should need legal training just to start a case.

3. Costs That Don't Decide the Outcome

Transparent, predictable fees

Low-cost options for common cases

Expanded access to legal support

Justice should not depend on what you can afford to endure.

4. Help at the Beginning—Not After the Damage

Guidance before the first filing

Clear explanation of what matters in court

Early support to prevent mistakes

Fixing problems early reduces pressure later.

5. Resolution Before Escalation

Not every case needs to become a prolonged fight.

structured mediation

guided agreements

faster resolution paths

This reduces pressure on families—and on the system.

What This Fixes

When strain is reduced and structure is improved:

time decreases

cost decreases

complexity decreases

access increases

And when that happens—

coherence increases.

Outcomes begin to match real life again.

Children gain stability. Mothers can stay in the process. Decisions become usable—not just legal.

What This Means for Ohio

This does not require starting over.

It requires redesign.

Some changes can happen immediately:

clearer forms

better instructions

defined timelines

Others require policy:

funding

statewide standards

expanded access

But all of them move in the same direction:

Toward a system that works.

This Is Not Hypothetical

Systems like this already exist in parts.

Where processes are simplified, outcomes improve.

Where access increases, participation increases.

Where strain is reduced, results get closer to reality.

The problem is not that solutions do not exist.

It is that they have not been applied consistently.

What This Means for You

If you have been through this system and felt like it was working against you—
you were not wrong.

It was.

Not because of the people inside it.

Because of how it is designed.

And design can change.

What Comes Next

Understanding the system is not enough.

Designing it is not enough.

The final step is action.

What can change now.

What can change next.

And what can be built alongside the system while it evolves.

Because once you can see the design—

you are no longer reacting.

You are building something better.

Chapter 10: Deployment – What Can Change Now

The mother in Marion County has moved on.

Her case is closed.

On paper, there is an outcome.

There is an agreement. There is a record.

But her life is still the same place where this started.

She is still managing stability. Still protecting her children. Still living with the result the system produced.

And that result is not what she needed.

Not because she was wrong. Not because she didn't try.

Because the system filtered what she was able to fight for.

This Was Never Just One Case

What happened to her is not rare.

It happens every day.

Across Ohio. Across counties. Across different situations.

Different names.

Same pattern.

Women walk into the system needing it to work.

Many never make it all the way through.

Not because they lose.

Because they cannot stay.

What You've Seen

You have seen how the system actually works:

Time creates pressure

Cost creates limits

Complexity creates risk

Access determines who remains

You have seen the filter.

And once you see it, you cannot unsee it.

What Can Change Right Now

Not everything has to wait.

Some things can change immediately.

Clarity can improve.

Forms can be simplified. Instructions can be made clear.

Timelines can be defined.

Support can exist earlier.

Guidance can happen before mistakes are made. Help can exist before pressure builds.

Communities can step in.

Women can support each other. Resources can be shared. Gaps can be filled.

These are not large reforms.

But they reduce strain.

And when strain drops, everything changes.

What Requires Bigger Change

Other changes require coordination.

Policy. Funding. System-wide standards.

Limits on delay. Control over cost. Consistent processes across counties.

These changes take time.

But they are not optional if the system is going to work.

What Can Be Built Alongside the System

Not every solution has to come from inside the courts.

Some of the most effective changes can be built around them.

Local support networks. Guidance systems. Practical help for real-life needs.

Transportation. Childcare. Time.

These are not small issues.

They are the difference between staying in the system—and being filtered out of it.

This Is a Design Problem

Nothing you've seen in this book is random.

It is the result of how the system is built.

And that means it can be rebuilt.

Not perfectly.

But better.

A system that:

moves faster

costs less

is easier to understand

keeps people in long enough to be heard

That is not unrealistic.

It is achievable.

What This Means for You

If you have been through this system and felt like it was working against you—

you were not wrong.

You were experiencing the design.

And now you can see it.

You can see:

where pressure comes from

why decisions shift

how outcomes are shaped

And that matters.

Because if you've lived this, you already understand the system better than most people making decisions about it.

That means you are not just someone affected by it.

You are someone who can help change it.

This Is Where Change Starts

Not with perfect policy.

With clarity.

With people who can see the system clearly—and refuse to accept it as normal.

With people who understand that:

There is no freedom until women and men are equal under the law.

And equality under the law does not just mean rules.

It means access.

It means usability.

It means outcomes that match real life.

Closing

Most women don't lose in court.

They are filtered out before justice ever reaches them.

Now you know why.

And now you know it doesn't have to stay that way.

Conclusion: This Was Never Just About the Courtroom

The mother in Marion County did everything she could.

She showed up. She filed the paperwork. She told the truth.

She stayed as long as she could.

And still—

the outcome she lives with is not the one she needed.

Not because she was wrong. Not because her case didn't matter.

Because the system decided what she could sustain—before it ever decided what was right.

This was never just about the courtroom.

It was about everything that happens before a decision is made.

Everything that happens while someone is trying to stay in the process.

You've seen it now.

Time creates pressure. Cost creates limits. Complexity creates risk. Access determines who remains.

And together—

they form the filter.

This isn't just a justice system.

It's a filtering system.

Most women don't lose in court.

They are filtered out before justice ever reaches them.

That is not justice.

There is no freedom until women and men are equal under the law.

And equality under the law does not just mean the rules are the same.

It means the system is usable.

It means:

you can enter

you can stay

you can be heard

and the outcome actually works in real life

Right now, for too many women in Ohio, that is not true.

But this is not permanent.

This is not a failure of intent.

It is a failure of design.

And design can change.

You've already seen how.

Reduce strain. Simplify structure. Protect access. Align outcomes with real life.

This is not theory.

It is direction.

If you've lived this, you already understand the system better than most people making decisions about it.

That matters.

Because that means you are not just someone affected by the system.

You are someone who can help change it.

You can see it clearly now.

And once you can see it—

you can't go back to believing it works the way it should.

That clarity is where change begins.

Most women don't lose in court.

They are filtered out before justice ever reaches them.

Now you know why.

And now you know it was never supposed to work this way —

and now you know how to help change it.

About the Author

Travis Vought is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran, intelligence professional, and systems designer with more than a decade of experience in high-stakes environments where systems either protect people or fail them.

As a Staff Sergeant and Human Intelligence specialist, he conducted interrogations, threat assessments, and analysis in situations where a single design flaw could cost lives. After his service, he moved into financial crimes compliance at J.P.

Morgan Asset Management, leading global policy initiatives and building systems to detect risk, prevent abuse, and hold institutions accountable.

What he saw in both worlds was the same pattern: systems rarely fail because people are malicious. They fail because they were never designed for the real humans who have to use them.

That pattern is what led him to write this book.

Travis is also the founder of a veteran-led nonprofit that delivers direct, community-based support to disabled and homebound veterans — practical help where government systems fall short. He lives in Marengo, Ohio, with his family and is focused on making Ohio's family courts work for the women and children who need them most.

He believes justice should not depend on how long you can wait, how much you can spend, or how well you can navigate complexity. It should simply work.