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To whom it may concern:

Denise and Eric Rekstad have a letter reiterating the basis for my opinion regarding the transfer of the minor child Azaria from her grandparents' home to her parents' home as ordered by the Court. It is my understanding that the Court has ordered an immediate return by the 24<sup>th</sup> of November and from there has curtailed contact with her grandparents in spite of unanimous agreement by the experts involved in this case that Azaria's primary attachment is to her grandparents and that she considers them to be her psychological parents. There is also agreement from her therapist, the reunification specialist and myself that to move this child is very likely to cause psychological damage and that a gradual move back to her parents is more likely to mitigate that damage and have at least some chance of success. Mr. Brodbeck was very clear that he did not consider the child's best interests in making his report, rather, he measured the parties compliance to a stipulation when determining that the child should be returned home. This is very concerning as it does not address the child's needs nor her mental health issues as is generally the responsibility of the CFI.

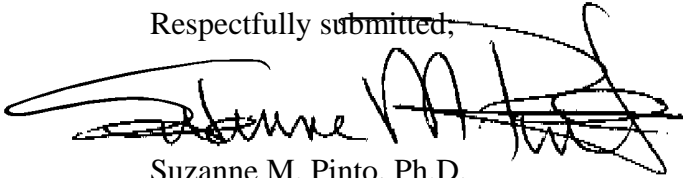
In my 25 years of practice, I have been unable to find any research or child therapist who would recommend the type of transition that has been ordered. I have consulted with Dr. Scott Brown, a well known therapist for young children and a professor at the University of Colorado, Boulder (teaching, among other things, child development) and he could not provide me with any recommendations for an immediate loss of psychological parents when there is no evidence of severe endangerment to the child (as in a Social Services intervention). This is a child who has problems, according to her therapist, bordering on attachment/separation anxiety from her psychological parents (the Rekstads). She is at risk for the development of significant psychological distress and long term emotional sequelae if her needs are not addressed. The research is clear that "long term personality defects, intimacy issues and relationship problems are the result of having attachments disrupted."

Again, "there is no developmental system that advocates for depriving a child, forcing a child particularly abruptly, to lose their psychological parents." In order to allow Azaria to attach to her parents, they need to be available and responsive to her needs. Of interest, is that Azaria's need is to be with her grandparents; the one need her parents are unable to be responsive to.

The only way to ensure that this child is able to cope with these dramatic changes is to develop a slow, developmentally positive re-introduction into her parents' lives that also ensures that she feels that she has access to her grandparents and that all of her parents are supportive of her. The Colorado therapist will need to be working very closely with Lori Kuehn to help this child make the best transition. Dr. Zirkle proposed a viable transition structure.

I am more than happy to discuss these recommendations and concerns further. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Suzanne M. Pinto', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Suzanne M. Pinto, Ph.D.  
Licensed Psychologist