

Dear Hope and Home Board of Directors,

We have been foster parents with Hope and Home for over one year and have participated in both long term and respite placements. We have cared for 17 children in our home since licensure.

Over the past year, we have seen some attitudes and actions that were cause for concern. During our training, we observed that Ross Wright enjoyed a very high status and adoration in the organization. At first, we attributed this to the fact that he was the CEO. Over the past year, we witnessed a hero, cult-like worship of Ross. Privately, we discussed how unhealthy that was and that the organization would struggle when Ross retired. In one of the Facebook live events, we were disturbed when Ross casually mentioned that he and Jacque Thurman were married. From a leadership and management perspective, marriage to a direct supervisor is not wise. Marriage of the top two leaders in an organization can be incredibly unhealthy and creates an environment ripe for abuse. We were disturbed and heart broken by the allegations of abuse and harassment but find them credible because of the unhealthy leadership structure. We find the accusations that Ross has proposed romantic relationships with subordinates very believable, because as his marriage to Jacque attests, it clearly happened at least once. With a dominant and charismatic male leader surrounded by female employees, we were not surprised to learn of sexual harassment.

Hope and Home is not confronted with a single report but a pattern of abuse and misconduct that centers around the CEO, Ross Wright. We were dismayed to learn that the board's response to calls for accountability and reform has been to threaten legal action and to dismiss and ignore victims. Perhaps what is most sickening, is that abused and vulnerable children have been used as an excuse and a shield to hide behind while victimizing others. The victims are the people who have been called to advocate and care for those same children. The irony is abhorrent.

In a letter to foster parents, the board touted the fact that they had interviewed the management team, all of whom report to Ross. Additionally, Jacque is the most senior member of the management team next to Ross and enjoys a special relationship with him. This calls into question the integrity of the process. Outside of the board's response, staff members were present at the June support group meeting to discuss the allegations. They mischaracterized and downplayed the lawsuit and denigrated people who have been calling for accountability and reform on this issue. Additionally, they lied about the Gazette reporter's contact with Ross stating that she apologized to him. We contacted the reporter and she categorically denied apologizing to him stating that the suggestion was a "blatant lie".

It is the board's job to provide structure, oversight and accountability. Thus far, the board has abdicated that responsibility and in doing so, jeopardized the integrity and mission of caring for vulnerable children. Furthermore, if the board's response to a failure within leadership is to ignore and minimize issues, what will its response be if a bigger sin issue arises? How will it respond if a child is victimized? The precedent established has dangerous implications.

Ross and Jacque have shown a wanton disregard for boundaries in their own workplace relationship which erodes their credibility. As a foster parent, multiple reports of ostracization and discrimination makes us extremely hesitant to approach them. Additionally, when we experienced a crisis with a foster child, we asked for a meeting with Ross or Jacque. Despite repeated promises during training that they always had an open door for parents and would prioritize foster families, their

calendars were booked and both were unavailable. The child was ultimately moved to a new placement and the requested meeting no longer needed. In that moment, the assurances and promises made during training became hollow. As parents, we will not bring concerns to people who are unsafe, unavailable and have demonstrated poor judgement. Ross and Jacque are a liability, not an asset, to the ultimate success of Hope and Home and its mission.

Foster care is a spiritual battlefield. Hope and Home is committed to healing and restoration. Therefore, it is not surprising that the organization is experiencing spiritual attack. It is the board's responsibility to defend and protect the mission of serving vulnerable children. A key defensive strategy is to ensure that the employees, leadership, and the board act with integrity and are above reproach. Strict adherence to policies and procedures that have been designed to create a safe and equitable working environment also help safeguard the organization from attack because people are fallible. Hope and Home is an overtly Christian organization. How does continued support of people who victimize and oppress others point people to Jesus. How does the board reconcile its own efforts to silence victims and calls for accountability with the message of truth and justice found in scripture?

Hope and Home, through their own decisions, has an unhealthy leadership structure that has resulted in a deceitful and abusive environment. We believe that with God's grace, that can be changed and redeemed. We believe new leadership is absolutely vital to Hope and Home's healing as an organization and its ability to fulfill its calling to serve and advocate for abused and neglected children. We are expectantly waiting for the board of director's swift action to move into a new future of integrity, hope, and healing that reflects Christ.

Regards,

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