

Dr. Grace Bulltail
1710 University Avenue #285
Madison, WI 53726

September 25, 2019

Attorney General Tim Fox
Montana Department of Justice
215 N Sanders, Third Floor
PO Box 201401 Helena, MT 59620-1401

Attorney General Fox,

I am writing to tell you of my family's experience with Big Horn County officials after learning of the death of my niece Kaysera Stops Pretty Places. Kaysera's great-grandparents and I raised her since she was an infant and I consider her to be my own daughter. I am also asking your office to do whatever is in your capacity to ensure that the circumstances of her death are investigated.

I was told of my daughter's death and the identification of her body by my sister Percelia Bulltail who had reported her missing nearly a month ago. I was at my new job in Wisconsin and my fiancé had to come and pick me up off of the floor of my office to eventually make our way back to Montana. The local community knew a body had been discovered, however, we did not know the identity until weeks later. Since the discovery of her body, our family had not been informed on the basic details by law enforcement. The only information we had was from the county coroner, Terry Bullis, after we made funeral arrangements. We then we reached out to the county attorney for further information.

The county attorney agreed to meet with my family. He stated he was not sure who was leading the investigation due to reorganization and general turmoil in the sheriff's office. In addition, the county attorney pointed out the conflict of interest of the county coroner also being a business owner as well as his tendency to quickly make the determination of cause of death as exposure to alcohol and natural causes under his charge as county coroner. In my grief, I have needed to make several notes and I attempted to make a recording of our conversation with the attorney to ensure I had all the details. He did not seem receptive to this and I eventually ended the recording. After this he was more forthcoming of information to my family.

When my sister, Percelia Bulltail reported Kaysera missing, law enforcement had not asked for phone information such as phone number or service provider. My sister felt that she was brushed off by the sheriff's department. No one in our family had been interviewed by law enforcement. This was why our family did not reach out to law enforcement as we did not feel that they were being proactive in their efforts.

Furthermore, we felt that the county attorney could have handled the meeting with my family with basic decorum and in a professional manner. Mr. Harris told our family that he had planned on prosecuting my niece for a video of her in an altercation with another teenager, and if he had

she may still be alive. As this was the first we were hearing any information on findings regarding the discovery of Kaysera's body we held to remain in the meeting. During the course of the meeting the county attorney behaved in a discourteous manner to myself and other family members and often made facetious remarks such as "How do you know that nothing is being done?" Is this how grieving family members should expect to be treated by a county official?

I had asked that the county attorney's office look into accessing Kaysera's social media account and phone records. This was the primary objective of the meeting with the county attorney for myself, to know that these critical sources were being investigated. He explained that anyone can subpoena a Facebook account, not just law enforcement. Still not sure if the account would be investigated, I said I would do whatever I could to access the account. Again, I received a facetious remark from Mr. Harris telling me that I would be tampering with evidence if I tried to gain access myself. We left the meeting not feeling assured that action would be taken given the state of the sheriff's department. We were advised and subsequently asked to talk to the sheriff and he responded several days later without further information.

Until we had spoken to other county officials, all we had to rely on was information from the county coroner. The county coroner informed us that we would receive an autopsy report last Monday. After Kaysera's memorial service, he told us that the report would be another 3 to 4 weeks. He then proceeded to tell us that when the toxicology report arrives it will "show there was drug or alcohol use detected that the cause would be exposure to alcohol or substance." I was extremely upset by this casual, premature determination of Kaysera's cause of death and I had to ask him for the documentation that I had come for to keep my composure. He also informed us that her death certificate would be pending until the report is received.

My sister, Kaysera's mother, was advised by the coroner to have Kaysera's remains cremated. Our family was not comfortable with this particularly since we do know what happened to her and that cremation is against our family's beliefs. My sister went ahead with the coroner's recommendation so that Kaysera would be returned to us. We were not able to plan a proper burial as we were told she would not be returned to us until later in the week. We had expected to have a memorial service without Kaysera's ashes and were unaware the remains would arrive earlier and had to rush to plan for the burial. We are still not comfortable that we had to move forward with this method of burial as the investigation is so uncertain.

I am asking that the coroner's actions, particularly cause of death determinations, be examined and monitored. I myself am a licensed engineer, I take my oath to uphold my professional charge under my license very seriously. I ask that Terry Bullis is held accountable to the standards of his professional licensing board(s) including the state Board of Funeral Services. I am also asking that the Big Horn County attorney and sheriff's office be held fully accountable in carrying out the investigation regarding my daughter's death. I agree with the county attorney that Bullis' position as a county official and for-profit business owner is a conflict of interest. I paid a lot of money for the funeral expenses for my daughter to this business owner that I do not feel is completing his official duties with an objective view. I recently started a new job as an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and I have not yet been given my first paycheck. I had to relocate and move across country in the last month at my own expense and the money I had to pay Bullis is money that I do not have. I imagine many grieving families

in our situation are in the similar financial positions. Not mention that we will likely have to hire additional legal representation to ensure that justice is served for our stolen daughters.

I am asking that these matters be considered and that you act to help our family determine what happened to our daughter.

Sincerely,

Dr. Grace Bulltail