

**House Bill 2929-A4 (Favorable)**  
**Christopher Tapp (Idaho Exoneree)**  
Senate Committee On Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation  
May 11, 2021

Thank you Chair, and Members of the Committee. My name is Christopher Tapp.

I am from nearby Idaho, and in 1998 I was found guilty of a rape and murder that I did not commit. I spent 20 years and 53 days in prison while the real perpetrator walked free.

In 2017 I was released from prison and 2 years later, in 2019, my innocence was finally confirmed by DNA evidence and the DNA donor admitting he acted alone in this horrible crime.

I am so grateful for the tenacity of Carol Dodge - the mother of the woman who I was wrongfully convicted of raping and murdering - and the relentless efforts of the Idaho Innocence Project, Judges for Justice, my public defender John Thomas, the Innocence Project and countless others that helped me.

I was barely more than a teenager when I falsely confessed to this crime, because of pressure and coercion by the Idaho Falls police department. Those officers threatened me with the death penalty, lied about the existence of incriminating evidence against me, told me I had repressed memories of doing this horrible crime, and supplied me with details of the crime to make my false statements more credible.

At my trial, one officer testified that I knew details of the crime before I was shown crime-scene photos. The videotape of my false confession shows that was not true. Police relied on testimony of a witness that directly contradicted my false confession. Eventually that witness recanted, and said the police had threatened to arrest her on drug charges.

Being in prison is as horrible as you can imagine - and being there when you are innocent is that much worse. I missed out on 20 years of my life. I wasn't able to spend my father's last years with him or go to his funeral when he passed.

Idaho also keeps police disciplinary records strictly confidential, like Oregon. Because of this, it was only because of ongoing civil litigation that my lawyers and I discovered that the officer who coerced me to give a false confession may have engaged in similar behavior in another case. If we had access to that information during my appeal, we could have detected that pattern earlier and maybe I wouldn't have spent 20 long years in prison.

When police officers coerce false confessions, or threaten witnesses, or lie on the stand, it is wrong. This is the type of behavior that leads to wrongful convictions like mine if it is allowed to continue without accountability. Keeping these records confidential means it's impossible to know if there are other innocent people in prison right now based on the word of untrustworthy police officers.

I strongly support this bill so that officers who engage in misconduct aren't able to hide in the shadows any longer. I am humbled to stand here before you today and be able to speak on behalf of all wrongfully convicted innocent people. I am so grateful that you are considering this bill that would shine a light on police misconduct, and help prevent injustices like my case. I thank you for your time and urge you to pass this bill.