

To: House Committee On Judiciary

February 25, 2021

From: Angela

Re: HB 2002

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee,

As the mother of a murder victim who fought for justice for my child for nearly a decade, I urge you to vote no on House Bill 2002.

Since my son's murder in 2011, violent felons and their apologists have tried to flip the narrative when it comes to talking about victims of violent crime. In their world, murderers and violent rapists are to be pitied and coddled, while the real victims are portrayed as "blood thirsty" and vengeful if they seek justice and a maximum sentence.

My oral testimony covers the myriad of reasons that I oppose HB 2002. So for my written testimony, I have included my second victim's impact statement, which I read in court after my son's killer finally pleaded guilty on June 3, 2020 – almost nine years to the day after he brutally murdered my child.

Please read **every single word** of my statement so that you can fully comprehend the devastating, long-term impact that my son's murder has had on my family. We are the REAL victims here. Not my son's killer.

When you consider this bill, I urge with you to think – really think – about both of my sons. The one who was beaten to death so brutally that his brain began to liquify. And the little boy who has been forced to grow up in the shadow of this horrific crime.



Sincerely,

Angela
Washington County resident

Angela

Victim's Impact Statement at Mr. M's Guilty Plea Hearing

June 3, 2020

In the fall of 2012, when I wrote my victim's impact statement in preparation for Mr. M's sentencing after the first trial, I was never at a loss for words. I knew exactly what I wanted to say and how I wanted to convey the extent of pain that Mr. M caused myself and my family. But now, less than two weeks shy of the ninth anniversary of B's brutal and senseless murder, I find myself struggling to summarize nine years' worth of unimaginable grief and trauma.

So much has changed in the past nine years. So many missed firsts. So many dreams unrealized. And a lifetime's worth of heartache.

Against the ever-present backdrop of Mr. M's relentless quest to escape responsibility, I have been quietly raising my surviving son. I have done everything in my power to ensure that he is safe, well cared for, and above all, to know that he is loved. All the while, I have never wavered in my fight these past nine years to seek justice for both of my boys.

My son was barely three years old the first time he became aware that our family was different. And he wanted to know why. While my first instinct was to shield my son from the truth, I also vowed that I would never lie to him. So I worked with trauma specialists to explain to him in age-appropriate terms why he didn't have a father, and that he had a brother who had died. Prison became an "adult time out." Prison guards were "helper people" that kept us safe from Mr. M, who had "owies" in his heart and head that were so big they couldn't ever be healed." And I explained to my son that his brother died because Mr. M "hurt baby B's body until it stopped working."

I will never forget my son's first day of Kindergarten. As I hugged him goodbye, anxiously walked out of his classroom and outside the school, I tried to suppress the tears that I'd been holding back all morning. Safely ensconced in my car, I burst into tears. All I could think of was that two little boys should have been embarking on this great adventure together. But instead of two best friends walking hand in hand together into school that day, I left one sweet, scared little boy there all by himself.

As my son grows up, he has become painfully aware of the fact that he doesn't have a father. Every time a child at school talks about the fun they had with their dad, my son is reminded of what he's lost. The pressure he feels to answer a seemingly innocuous question about why he doesn't have a dad is overwhelming and upsetting to him. And while I've worked with him for years to come up with answers to stave off more questions from curious classmates and friends, nothing feels quite right to him. He doesn't want to lie. But he knows that he can't tell most people the truth.

All my son wants is to be accepted for who he is. But because of what Mr. M has done, he lives with a sense of shame and worry that if he tells the wrong person, he will be bullied and teased. In Kindergarten, he longed for acceptance as he shared his secret with a little girl in his class. One morning, as we walked into school, that little girl looked me square in the eye and asked me if "it was true that my son's father had murdered his brother." Stunned by the question, I quickly excused myself from the room so I wouldn't start crying in front of my son, as my son's teacher, who knew our story, swooped in to take care of the aftermath.

Since that incident, my son has only shared his secret with his best friend, who even at his young age, responded with a compassion and kindness that is beyond what most adults are capable of. It is my hope that as my son becomes older and he claims this story as his own, he will no longer be afraid to share every part of who he is. Because he didn't do anything wrong. No one in my family did. The only person responsible for my son's suffering is Mr. M. And the immeasurable pain he has caused my little boy is one of the many reasons that I will NEVER forgive him.

While the world has changed dramatically over the last nine years, the one thing that has remained consistent is Mr. M's refusal to take responsibility for what he has done. His repeated denial of the truth, his complete lack of remorse, and his cruel and vindictive desire to inflict as much suffering on my family as possible has never changed. He's repeated his false mantra to his family that he's the real victim, and he's allowed, and even encouraged them to intimidate and bully me as retaliation for not supporting him. As recently as last fall, Mr. M's brother parked outside of my home in what I believe was an attempt to send a message that they would never leave me alone. While it was frightening to know that the brother of my son's killer was outside my door, nothing that they ever do or say will weaken my resolve to keep my son safe and ensure that he has a good life.

June 12 will mark nine years since my innocent baby was violently and callously ripped from this world. The precious few memories that I have to share of him with his brother are all colored by the reality of Mr. M's brutal, cowardly act.

While I'm grateful that this gut-wrenching phase of the legal process is over, I don't believe for one second that Mr. M's motives are anything but selfish. In private, I suspect he will still maintain his innocence to his family, saying that he had no choice but to fall on his imaginary sword in an effort to "protect" me and my son. The truth is that Mr. M wanted to end HIS suffering, not my family's. I firmly believe that Mr. M offered to plead guilty in the hopes that down the road, his "admission" will be looked upon favorably by the parole board. He did not have a change of heart, nor has he shown any remorse - he simply wants this to be done.

The aftermath of B's murder will never be over for my family. Justice has been delayed for an excruciating nine years. But tonight, when I look up to the heavens, I am comforted to know that my precious B can at long last rest in peace.