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Testimony in Support HB409

Juveniles Convicted as Adults-Sentencing Limitations Reduction

House Judiciary Committee

Good afternoon, Delegate Lewis, J, members of the House Judiciary Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to offer support testimony for House Bill 409. My name is Rev. Tara L. Martin and I was born and raised in Baltimore, Maryland. I am the wife of Mr. Randall Martin III, who is currently being housed in the ECI Maryland Prison. In this testimony, I want to speak about Randall's current circumstances and how he got there, second to highlight some of his accomplishments, and third as to the man he is, what he means to me, our family and the importance of passing the House Bill 409.

I preface the following with total clarity that I in no means do suggest, infer nor hint of any excuse for Mr. Martin. I do intend to just note the facts as his story goes. Randall is forty-one (41) years of age, having already served twenty-four (24) years on a 75 year, all suspended but 55 years, with 5 years of probation prison sentence for attempted murder. The aforementioned is not the greatest first impression of him for sure, however please continue to read.

Mr. Martin has been one of Maryland's incarcerated citizens since the age of seventeen (17). He has been incarcerated more years than he has lived free, his entire adult life has been behind the bars of a prison. However, his story does not begin there. While having the privilege of performing my civic duty as a juror (not pertaining to Randall's case), a profound question was asked of the defendant, "How did they get to this place?"

Randal was raised in the proverbial "Cosby" home, the two professional parents, middle class household. However, as the saying goes, "Looks can be deceiving". Randall suffered many years of traumatic physical and mental abuse by the hands of his father Mr. Randall Martin Jr. (Who was recently sent to prison for abuse, arson and attempt murder). My husband reported the abuse in the two states the family lived in (Maryland and Virginia). Each time the reports had been arguably not been taken as serious as they should have been. Thus, a tragedy that sent a message to the entire household to keep quiet for nothing would change for the better.

At the age of fifteen (15), in Randall's junior year in high school, he ran away from home. The abuse he was receiving from his father, left him feeling safer as a homeless child. Randall's many years of being an

honor roll student, began to spiral downward with the abuse of drugs and alcohol to cope with his life. He was convinced by his school counselor at Western School of Technology, to return home back to his abuse.

Randall's drive to succeed, his desire to somehow make it drove him to continue school to his high school graduation. However, the drug and alcohol habit he picked up evolved into an abuse that channeled every other poor choice of a broken teenager. Randall committed a horrible crime, that had him taking a trip to prison forty-eight (48) hours before he was supposed to cross the stage for his graduation.

My husband has had twenty-four (24) years to think about, repent, pray, cry and show by his daily actions that he is not the abused, immature teenager that committed that crime so many years ago. Randall has tried to take advantage of every opportunity given to him, while in prison to improve his education and himself cognitively. A few areas to highlight are:

- Earning his associates degree, graduating Summa Cum Laude,

- Eighteen (18) plus years of service with the Alternative to Violence (AVP), and many other achievements and awards.

But, most of all, Randal Martin III is my husband, best friend, pray partner and the one that I know needs a second chance at life. I know that the purpose of prison is to have a time of repentance, reflection and rehabilitation. However, when a immature seventeen (17) year old gets sentenced to 55 years in prison, it leaves him with no hope or realistic idea of how to be a productive citizen.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tara L Martin