

January 24, 2021

Hi, I am Janette Gonzalez Graham,

I would like to be heard as a witness as an active participant in the Maryland Legislative process for the bill sponsored by Delegate Wells, where state court administrators ensures that each judge in the state receives tests, training, and evaluations to remove any bias approach for anyone that is accused of a crime.

I am a mother of a juvenile who was charged as an adult in Frederick Maryland at the age of 15. I was told by 5 different lawyers, two public defenders, two case managers in the department of juvenile justices and one case manager within Dept of corrections that your son is not being charged and sentenced because of the allege crimes but more so to bring money to Frederick Maryland. That the three female judges will follow what the prosecutor favors simply because of the charges and not consider all the facts of the case. I was told the higher I could afford to pay for a lawyer the more I would be heard, and those funds would be used to put aside the politics. I was told repeatedly that if these charges were placed in front of a Baltimore city or Baltimore county judge, they would have striven to rehabilitate my son within the juvenile system does not bring a 15 year to an adult system. The racism and bias behaviors were clear in Frederick, many parties involved was afraid to speak up and out simply not to lose their jobs or help me understand the gaps of the legal and criminal system. My son is now 20, we chat daily about ways we both wish we have the confidence and knowledge we have now to fight to receive a fair trial. We were so frightened by the feedback that we took a pled deal to be used as an example of punishment, because we observed experienced the judge not refereeing between both parties to render the fair discussions in my son's case. Judges hold a great deal of power with sentencing and knowing a bill like this can intervene to bring a professional approach with justice having an annual training, testing or evaluate judges to understand the importance of being impartial regardless of their relationship with the lawyer, or lack of knowing the defender personally. I respect the judiciary system; great leaders always look for ways to improve and refine to grow the organization and successfully implement the mission. I hope you understand that this is my personal experience and encounter, and this has not made me lose trust in all judges. I simply agree with Delegate Wells to have a process in place for all to learn and stay align with removing bias approach.

I have attached a video as well.

Thank you.