

Dawn Collins Testimony - Oppose HB0853

My name is Dawn Collins. I am a wife and mother to two children. I am an American, I am a patriot, and my son, Richard, was a third-generation service man.

My son, 2LT Richard Collins III, became a man at Bowie State University, a Historically Black College and University producing exceptional scholars, educators and dedicated service men and women.

My son, 2LT Richard Collins III, was murdered at a predominantly white institution by Sean Urbanski - a student at the University of Maryland, and a follower of white supremacist ideals.

I am urging representatives to oppose HBO853 and the “no limits” approach of this bill in how it would benefit mass murderers, serial rapists, child sex offenders, and those who have committed hate crime murderers - like the one that took my son.

There are a number of things that didn’t make the process of grieving our son any easier or any less painful. At the time of Richard’s murder, hate crime laws were inadequate, there were no victim or survivor-centered conversations, there wasn’t any compensation considerations for supporting families involved in these tragedies, statewide definitions of hate-crimes didn’t always trickle down to the local level, and my son did not receive his full military honors because of a technicality.

When my son 2nd Lieutenant Richard Collins III told me that *the world would know his name*, his murder by way of hate crime, was not the legacy he or our family wanted to be left with, but here we are - doing what we can to stand up, speak up, and call out injustice.

God has been gracious in the midst of grief, along with the help of many legislators, civil rights organizations, and community leaders, who have helped shape the work and impact of the 2nd Lt. Richard Collins III Foundation, created in honor of our son.

This bill would undermine the small justice that’s been given in the case of our son’s murder. Uplifting my son’s legacy means keeping the convicted murderers behind bars to complete their sentences as the least bit of consolation for the upheaval, grief, and violence that my family has had to endure since 2nd Lt. Richard Collins murder.

Please, for the sake of families across the State of Maryland, still grieving, recovering, and trying to make meaning out of the events that forever changed our family’s lives, oppose HBO853.