

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL #SB0562
Correctional Services - Geriatric and Medical Parole
From: Vivian Penda, Directly Impacted Mother
Date: 02/24/2022

Re: SUPPORT FOR BILL#SB0562

To: Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee

My name is Vivian Penda and I am the mother of Donald Brown. I am 86 years old and two years ago at my age, I would not have imagined that I would be fighting for my son's life.

My son was incarcerated at WCI and in the system for 35 years for a string of burglaries to feed his drug habit.

My son started using drugs, heroin, at the age of 15 and over the years declined into severe drug abuse. He was eventually incarcerated.

During my son's incarceration, he accumulated several health conditions that just kept getting worse.

While in the infirmary, for something small. Donald fell from a prison infirmary breaking his hip and suffering a brain bleed; he had diabetes, a stroke, and had his leg amputated because of a foot infection.

Donald was confined to a wheelchair and dependent on others to do the simplest tasks. After a while my son became so disoriented and confused, he could not remember where he was sometimes. On top of all that, my son got COVID.

Every time I got news, it seemed like it was more and more bad news.

He got so bad we started to petition the Maryland Parole Commission to get him out of there and into a better medical care situation.

That commission denied our petition for medical parole. The worst part is they never said why!

They reversed it on June 18, 2020, but he was not released until July 2nd but I was unable to see him in person because of COVID restrictions at his nursing home.

My son died four days later.

Each of you in this place has the power to do something. I am here to ask you to listen, listen closely. If this was your family member, your child, your father, your brother you would want the same thing. BASIC HUMANE TREATMENT.

You have the power to give those who are severely ill the power to get treatment. My son was not a serial killer, not a child molester and yet the way the current medical parole process is, makes it IMPOSSIBLE for basic medical care. My child was no danger to public safety. He could hardly walk on his own. A Lot of people there are suffering in that way.

You all must make a change.

In my experience and opinion, staying in prison when you have multiple health issues makes it worse. This is a violation of basic humanity, so let's change it.

I support this bill because it will clarify this process, enabling those who no longer pose any threat to public safety because they are physically incapable to spend their final days beyond the prison walls.

I ask you as a mother and citizen of Maryland to PASS SB0562

Thank you,
Vivian Penda,
Mother of Donald Brown