

Farah VanGenderen
415 Rolling Rd
Salisbury, MD 21801
410-422-1843

RE: MD SB26

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Farah VanGenderen, a licensed Clinical Social Worker with over 25 years of experience treating and advocating for trauma survivors and pushing for stricter penalties against child abuse offenders. Twice, I stood in this building, passionately seeking justice and enhanced protections for teenage victims. Today, I share my personal anguish following the tragic loss of my son, Ian VanGenderen, on September 27, 2019.

His life was unfairly taken by a drunk driver, deemed as manslaughter—a socially acceptable form of killing by legal standards. The driver, with no valid license and a history of driving violations, took my son's life. The legal system, marred by pleas, reduced sentencing, and time served, allowed her to be released just **nine months** after the conviction. A sentence of 10-years for vehicular manslaughter, reduced by pleas of the guilty, reduced by “good behavior” during her incarceration. If the term allowed had been 20 years perhaps she would have served twice that time, if the minimum that has to be served were raised that would also support that happening.

My son, a promising young man who had just completed four years of military service, was killed by someone intoxicated enough to run over him, not once, but twice. His penalty for leaving the house that evening was death. This injustice has not only altered the course of our lives but accentuates a disturbing complacency in our laws.

I implore you, respected legislators, to address the glaring loopholes in our current legal framework. Offenders, even first-time ones, impact lives significantly. Longer sentencing guidelines could, and would, draw a definitive line between choices to drink and the consequences of compromising decision-making and reflexes. This, to me, is intent—a choice which should have repercussions.

Let my son's death be a catalyst for change—a call to action. I beseech the Maryland Assembly to enact laws reflecting the gravity of such offenses, honoring the memory of those lost and safeguarding the future. Our roads should not be a breeding ground for preventable tragedies. Imagine your child or loved one in Ian's position. We need laws that send a clear message: killing someone is a grave matter, and every life touched by potential tragedy, matters.

I appreciate your time and consideration. May you find the courage to champion this cause for all Marylanders, challenging the notion that drunk driving is a tolerable form of homicide. It's time to alter the narrative and take a stand against the current complacency.

Sincerely,

Farah VanGenderen