

**Bill HB0264 Criminal law – Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel- Increased Penalties (Jamari’s Law)**

**FAVORABLE (FAV)**

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Thirteen years ago my son and only child, Richard Jackson, was killed via vehicular manslaughter, a crime designated as nonviolent with a maximum sentencing of ten years. A crime which I later found out, was in the same category as someone who writes a bad check.

The perpetrator was sentenced to 10 years, but it was reduced to 18 months with them eventually serving less than a year.

The vehicle that was being driven recklessly and without regard to consequences slammed into my son, connecting with his body in a way that left no chance of survival. This “nonviolent” crime created an impact that broke bones and ravaged organs. This “nonviolent” crime left my son alone and suffering. This nonviolent crime killed my son.

When we get in our cars, we know that we are responsible for a vehicle that has the power to do irreputable harm to ourselves and others, if not operated properly, and with adherence to the laws. When we blatantly make the choice to disregard the laws, we are also consciously making the choice to put others in danger.

This law (Jamari’s law) raises the consequences associated with such behavior. This measure, I believe, yields two pivotal and important effects. Firstly, it amplifies the range of potential sentences, thus influencing the perspectives of judges, juries and participants in the sentencing process. The increased terms bring about a heightened gravity to the committed offence. Secondly, and equally crucial, the increased sentencing acts as a deterrent. It has the potential to prompt individuals to reconsider before engaging in the illegal and heedless operation of a hazardous vehicle.

This law will not bring my son back. It will not erase the pain and anguish that I deal with on a daily basis, and it will not change the story of the many that have been affected by vehicular manslaughter. The hope however, is that it will change the future. If it saves one life and one mom’s anguish and heartbreak, it will be worth it.

