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To whom it may concern,

There are only so many words that can be used to convince someone to further condemn a person's life and in most cases that is a heavy burden to bear. How can one decide to punish ignorant and careless behavior when there was no intended malice? Well, the answer is quite simple, indulgent ignorance is indistinguishable from malice. When a person is sufficiently advanced in careless behavior then one can only assume the safety and consideration of others holds no merit or moral. Unfortunately, a twelve-year-old boy named Matthew forfeited his life due to such negligent thinking.

The day is April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018, Matthew, his mother, and his brother are on a normal walk through their neighborhood. Meanwhile, some distance away, a drug-impaired individual is choosing to climb into his van, turn on the engine, and begin driving. Eventually, the van makes its way to the area where Matthew and his family are walking. As the van rounds the corner of that residential street, the drug-impaired driver loses consciousness and veers the van off the road, plowing into a sidewalk. Years later, this sidewalk will serve as a memorial for people to remember and never forget how one negligent decision can shift an entire world. In those few seconds of drug-impairment and loss of control, the driver hits Matthew and kills him as his family, so nearby, must stand and watch. Blink and suddenly the world has shifted. Blink and suddenly his brother is an only child. Blink and now his parents have only one living child.

I wish I could say this is an isolated event or that scenarios like this don't happen nearly every day. But they do as, too often, ignorant individuals discard their knowledge of the law and what is right because negligent behavior is regularly diminished in court. Such is the case for the justice of Matthew, as the man who hit and killed him only served a four-year sentence, reduced from the original ten. Not every scenario and situation involving negligent manslaughter is the same but each act of negligence resulting in the loss of life can be concluded as nothing short of malice. Society only functions the way it does because the average person is not afraid to leave their home. The average person holds the belief that the laws they abide by will protect them. Ignorance of these laws should not be confused with accident. Ignorance of these laws requires the proper consequences.

Matthew will never be able to get his life back. My husband, his ex-wife, and living son will never be able to outlive the memory of what happened. So, adding years to a sentence that will never replace a life is the only way to ensure Matthew and children like him, lost to negligent behavior, will be remembered. And those who are not yet victims remain protected.