

HB 853 Testimony

Hi. My name is Dr. Deborah G. Haskins, and I am a victim & surviving 2 homicides—our son Joseph in Balto City in 2013 (a new dad) and our nephew Reuben in Baltimore County in 2014. Two innocent victims. Their murders led to my husband's health crisis/death in 2016. I also have family/friends who experienced incarceration and had 2nd chances. But I am here today to share why it is important for me as a **victim** to **support** the Second Chance Bill.

First, ***not all victims are the same***. We are not monoliths. Everyone's victim experience is their experience, their journey, and each person, each family, will choose a path for healing. What we are left with is how am I going to make sense out of something that does not make sense? How will I survive this horrendous experience? And what I know personally which is also influenced by my faith in God, by my profession as a therapist, and as a human being is this: I decided that for me not to pass on generational trauma, I have to heal!! Part of my healing includes forgiveness, and forgiveness is not an overnight process. I am forgiving each day for the rest of my life.

But what I also know is this: *Many offendersjustice-involved individuals were born into conditions, families, and communities that did not provide them with the best due to disparities like poverty & racism. Many are trauma survivors like me. And they had no resources early enough to intervene from developing chronic conditions.* When Joseph was murdered, I said, “I blame the adults because this person did not feel loved.” Well, I know it is not that simple, but I also know that God desires **each of us** to experience wholeness. And while prison is not the place one should go to for healing, it can happen even in that horrible space. I want everyone in the community to have an opportunity to be their best self. And that includes **redemption**. My failures didn’t land me in prison. I had 2nd chances and 3^{rds} and 4^{ths}. Passing this bill provides offendersjustice-involved humans opportunities to demonstrate in 20 years if they work on themselves, if they can restore self to become a better human being, then Maryland can give them a 2nd chance. Please vote yes to HB853 and think of your 2nd chances. Thank you.

Dr. Deborah G. Haskins

Victim and Homicide Survivor, Baltimore City