

My name is Shayla Ratliff, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 0066, also known as Jamari's Law.

I am submitting this testimony in honor of my late stepbrother, whose life was taken as a result of vehicular manslaughter. Our family lives every day with the reality that a loved one is gone forever, while the person responsible faced consequences that did not reflect the severity or permanence of that loss.

Manslaughter by vehicle is not a "simple accident." When reckless, negligent, or unlawful behavior behind the wheel results in someone's death, the impact is devastating and irreversible. Families are left with grief, trauma, and unanswered questions, while current penalties too often fail to reflect the seriousness of the harm caused.

SB0066 is an important and necessary step toward accountability. Increasing the maximum penalties for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel sends a clear message that Maryland takes these crimes seriously and values the lives lost. It also recognizes that repeat offenders and individuals with prior related convictions pose a greater risk to public safety and should face consequences that reflect that risk.

Jamari's Law is not about revenge, this is about justice, responsibility, and prevention. Stronger penalties can help deter reckless behavior, encourage safer choices, and acknowledge the profound loss experienced by victims' families. No law can bring my stepbrother back, but this legislation can help prevent other families from experiencing the same pain.

I respectfully urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on SB0066 and help ensure that Maryland's laws better reflect the value of human life and the seriousness of vehicular manslaughter.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Shayla Ratliff