

Testimony in Support of Jamari's Law

Submitted by: The Husband of Jaleisa Wilcox

Honorable Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Edward Gardner and I am here today as the **husband of Jaleisa Wilcox**, the **father of her four children**, and a **Maryland business owner** who must now raise our family without my wife.

Jaleisa was my partner in life, in parenting, and in business. She was the mother of our four children and a hardworking business owner who relied on Maryland's roadways every day as a passage for work and providing for her family. That roadway should have been safe.

Instead, through reckless and preventable behavior, my wife's life was taken.

What has been most difficult for our family is not only the loss itself, but what we learned about how the system responded afterward. **While the investigation into the collision that killed my wife was still pending — while charges were still being considered — the same individual responsible was ticketed again for another speeding infraction.**

That fact alone speaks volumes about the gaps in accountability that currently exist. A human life had already been taken, yet dangerous behavior continued without meaningful consequence. For our family, it felt as though my wife's life was treated as a traffic incident rather than the loss of a human being.

That is why we **support Jamari's Law**, while we would like to explore the options to reclassify these types of driving offenses as a violent crime when a life is lost in the commission of another crime.

For example Drinking And Driving, Speeding involved fatalities over 25 mph.

Jamari's Law recognizes that when someone chooses to drive recklessly or negligently and a life is lost, the consequences must reflect the seriousness of that harm. By increasing the maximum penalties for vehicular manslaughter from 10 years to 20, Jamari's Law gives judges the discretion to impose sentences that better match the devastation left behind and a true value of time for a human life.

Under current law, the person responsible for my wife's death was treated as a **non-violent offender**, despite the fact that our children will grow up without their mother and our family business was forever changed. Jamari's Law begins to correct that imbalance and sends a clear message that reckless driving that results in death is not a minor traffic offense.

We are not seeking revenge. We are seeking **accountability, deterrence, and public safety for all communities across our great state of Maryland**. No family should have to sit in a courtroom knowing a life was lost, while watching the system allow repeated dangerous behavior to continue unchecked.

As a husband, a father, and a Maryland business owner who still must use these same roads every day, I urge you to support Jamari's Law. Let Maryland's laws reflect the value of human life and the responsibility that comes with operating a vehicle on our shared roadways.

Thank you for your time, for listening to our story, and for honoring the memory of my wife,
Jaleisa Wilcox.

Respectfully,

Edward Gardner

Husband of Jaleisa Wilcox

Father of Her Children

Maryland Business Owner