

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 66
Manslaughter by Vehicle or Vessel - Increased Penalties (Jamari's Law)
Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 21, 2026

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I am Adrienne M. Mathis, a lifelong resident of St. Mary's County, a retired educator, a mother, and a concerned citizen. I am submitting this written testimony in the interest of justice and public safety. I strongly support Senate Bill 66, also known as Jamari's Law, which proposes a significant increase in penalties for manslaughter by vehicle or vessel. This bill would raise the maximum sentence for a first offense from 10 to 20 years and for subsequent convictions from 15 to 30 years. This measure is vital because it creates a much-needed stronger deterrent against drunk driving and more appropriately addresses repeat offenders.

SB66 is named in honor of Jamari Tyrese Duckett. Born on December 30, 2003, to Shownda Greenwell and John Duckett, Jamari was a kind-hearted, bright, and ambitious young man with a promising future. He planned to attend college and was excited about the next chapter after graduating from high school. Jamari deeply valued his time with his parents, siblings, family, and friends. Tragically, Jamari's life was cut short at age 18 on July 10, 2022, just weeks after his graduation, due to a devastating DUI crash that happened the night before. His death is a profound loss for his family, marking the fourth heartbreaking family loss attributed to a DUI since 1968.

This bill is necessary because current, shockingly lenient penalties equate vehicular homicide with simple misdemeanor assault. This gross injustice causes widespread outrage, as evidenced by a similar Maryland case where the driver who killed the beloved North Potomac couple, Ana and Miguel Ortiz, received only a few years in prison.

Drunk driving is a preventable tragedy that claims thousands of lives each year in the U.S. and puts an enormous strain on families. The impacts are broad, disproportionately affecting young people and communities of color through devastating loss, financial hardship, and intergenerational trauma, worsening existing inequalities.

This legislation isn't just a bill; it's a beacon of hope for families devastated by drunk and reckless driving. We must hold accountable those who put innocent lives at risk. While nothing can fully heal the pain of losing a loved one, Jamari's Law sends a clear message to potential offenders. Jamari had endless potential and was passionately dedicated to making the world a better place. His dreams were filled with hope and promise. It's our duty to carry forward his legacy. By passing Jamari's Law, we not only honor his memory but also motivate future generations to prioritize safe and responsible driving. Together, we can transform our grief into action and inspire change that reflects Jamari's spirit and vision for a brighter future.

To promote fairness and safety, we must:

- Raise penalties to match the value of human life and discourage reckless behavior;
- Bring justice to victims' families like the Duckett's;
- Align Maryland's laws with the seriousness of these crimes.

Support for Jamari's Law will:

- Discourage repeat drunk drivers;
- Save lives by ensuring accountability;
- Provide closure for affected families;
- Strengthen community trust in our justice system.

For all these reasons—the need to increase penalties to honor the sanctity of life, to serve justice for victims, and to enhance public safety—I respectfully ask the Judicial Proceedings Committee to give a favorable report on Senate Bill 66.

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