

Good Morning Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and distinguished guests of the committee.

My name is Ramona Rivera and I currently live in Danbury, Connecticut.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to share my story as a victim with you here today.

On July 14, 2007, at approximately 7 PM, my little 8 year old son, Royel Messiah Taft was run down and killed by a woman who was operating a vehicle while under the influence of PCP. Royel was in his yard waiting for a pizza delivery when the driver crashed through our fence and killed him as he ran for his life.

As my son lay on the street dying in the arms of his 11 yr old brother, his skull crushed beyond recognition and bleeding, the suspect jumped out of her vehicle and ran into the woods to hide her drugs.

So you are probably asking, why am I here. I am here today to tell the story about a habitual convicted felon, the criminal courts in Connecticut and how they have crossed paths with my innocent 8 yr old baby boy. It is a brief account of how a habitual felon, who receives numerous probation sentences and never serves any prison time, just walks or may I say, drives around the community and killed my innocent 8 yr old boy.

Let me talk about the person charged with killing my son and our criminal justice system.

On **June 06, 1992**, the suspect in my son's death, Natasha Kinion was charged with Robbery in the 2nd degree and Larceny in the 3rd degree.

On **July 08, 1993**, she was allowed to plead guilty **to both felonies**; she was given a **10 yr jail term suspended** and 5 years of probation.

While this case was pending, the suspect, Natasha Kinion was arrested and charged with **3rd degree assault, April 04, 1993**. For this she received another **1 year suspended** prison term.

Even though just two months prior to the assault arrest, she was also charged on **February 23, 1993** with **1 count of Sale of Illegal Drugs, 2 counts of**

Sale of Hallucinogenic drugs and 1 count of possession of narcotics. On March 16, 1995, she was given two - 8 year suspended prison sentences, and 5 years of probation.

Why is a person convicted of this many felonies handed down so many chances? She has never spent one day in prison, not 1 single day. **Why was her probation not revoked?** She was arrested and charged with felonies while on probation, **February 23, 1993. Someone messed up and needs to be accountable for there bad decisions.**

But t doesn't end here. On **May 06, 1996**, she was charged with **Larceny 6th degree and Failure to Appear in Court. She received a Nolle and \$200.00 fine, respectively.....**

The person that is charged with killing my son has received a total of 26 years of suspended sentences in just a 2 year period and she still has not stopped.

On July 14, 2006, a day I will never forget, (Natasha) gets behind the wheel of an SUV; by the investigators account, she was actually smoking PCP at the very moment she crashed through our fence and killed my baby as he stood in our yard waiting for pizza with several other children in the neighborhood. Many other children and families have been damaged beyond understanding because of this. What the neighborhood children and my son Malik L. Taft experienced that day will be relived in there minds continually forever.

She is a former resident of Wtby that came to joy ride with her friends and smoke drugs; the very same jurisdiction (Waterbury) where she has received all the suspended prison terms over the years. She had apparently traveled from her home in NYC to Waterbury, CT.

Why go anywhere else and commit crimes? Go where you know there will be leniency.

Can anyone tell me why so many suspended prison terms for all of these felonies and other arrests were allowed so many times? There aught to be a accountability for misuse of power. Why isn't a person like this prosecuted as a Habitual Offender? Our Criminal Justice System needs to make prosecutors accountable for allowing these repeat offenders to reenter their

doors without handing down a sentence and/or programs with probations to be complete. Also someone in probation should be held accountable for not violating Natasha. Maybe we need a re-vamping of all of our agencies because a lot of our problem lie with mans decision or shall I say ill-decisions. Our state needs a habitual offender, or 3 strikes law, that will be enforced because too many innocent people are being murdered by criminals that have and are still, thumbing their noses at our criminal justice system. I have also heard that there will be specific that will only be considered as a three strikes law. Please don't forget the other repeat offenders need serious discipline as well because if there is not there will be more Royels innocently killed because yet the system has left another gaping hole uncovered. Also, Prosecutors/Courts should be forced to enforce the habitual offender's law.

The Waterbury State's Attorney's Office can't answer my question as to why so may suspended prison terms were given to her, the victims advocates can't.

The only person that can is my dad. Having spent over 20 years working in the prison system here in Connecticut, he said the system is not perfect and it has not learned from its' mistakes and it is all we have and we must work to change it.

He has cited the case where in January 1996, a little boy about Royels age by the name of BJ Brown and his mom Karen (Pieler Case) were killed by an inmate that should not have been out in a Halfway House on early release.

And you know what, I believe my dad, he was in charge of the D.O.C oversight of Halfway Houses at the time and their supervised home release program. My dad said, "like his grandson Royel, he thinks about the BJ Brown/Karen Clarke killing all the time and how flawed our system of justice really is and how fragile life is." He also says, "they are so closely related in terms of the failure of our system to protect the innocent among us the small and innocent children, the elderly, and the decent hardworking among us victimized almost daily by repeat, habitual felons..

He has since retired and is living in North Carolina. He would be here to speak to you all, but he has been hurt by the loss of his grandson beyond words.

So, here I am almost 18 months after my Royel was killed, awaiting for the prosecutor or someone to call and tell me we are ready to go to trial, because, the defendant was offered yet another deal in Waterbury Superior Court - a PLEA DEAL of 12 years and she refused it. Why does a System allow the perpetrators of crimes so many limitless rights and the victims of crimes to be victimized over and over again?

She sits at the York CI on charges of Manslaughter 1st degree, Sale of Hallucinogenic Drugs and Operating Under the Influence. She has not taken advantages of any programs, just sits there showing no remorse, receiving disciplinary reports for misconduct, even while in prison – and this I say as a result of FOI documents my dad requested and received. I heard over and over again yesterday about the state not knowing who will repeat (Recidivism) take a look at conduct, non use of programs, and inmates that get caught with contraband. I want to tell you something about the minds of some of these criminals. They love to hear about a new program since they - are professional liars, career con-artists they give you what you want. I grew up in heart of the Ghetto as a child I have seen the lust they have for this God Awful Life and it's --**disgusting**. While everyone here maybe afraid to enter these streets I am not. I can stop and talk to one of these criminals in an unlocked unprotected facility and get them to tell me their deepest darkest secret and I will guarantee that it will not be the same conversation he had with the jail counselor. For jobs-----There out their. These people if you will call them that don't care and don't want to waste time ---too much effort. They are lazy—Easier to steal; selling drugs makes more money faster. Nothing is stopping these criminals from getting an education but themselves. Education and Job Training should be mandatory when they are released from prison.

I, on the other hand, sit home with just the memories of my little boy and wonder what, can I do to help prevent this from happening to another parent..... That is why I am here... So, I have gone back to college to obtain a Community Health degree because I believe that prevention is the key. After these at risk children have gone a stray it seems to be a down hill struggle. It's time to nip these problems in the bud. Thank you for your time and god bless you all.