

The Sex Offender Registry was a contributing factor in my son's Death. I am against HB 5679.

Our son, Uriah Williams, was convicted as a sex offender in 2001 or so. He made a mistake which he deeply regretted and paid above and beyond what is just. He was having trouble getting launched in life, earning a living, having a car, insurance, a home, and all that, but he was finding his way and learning how to do it. He was doing his best to provide for his family but was finding it difficult. They were living in a 1-bedroom apartment, with 2 toddlers and his wife pregnant with a third. Their marriage ended after this and she now has birthed 8 children, but only the first 3 are his. He had employment and then hurt his back and was taking pain killers. For some reason, his wife's 13-year-old sister was also staying in this crowded apartment. Though 13, she was tall and precocious and all over him. One evening they had ordered pizza and he had a couple of beers. Things progressed to where he kissed her and fondled her breast. End of story, he came to his senses and nothing more happened. He was not accused or found guilty of anything other than that. One day she was relating her story to a cousin and her aunt overheard the conversation. The "victim" was not traumatized but rather disappointed that it stopped there. Never-the-less, she was not of an age to consent. The family enlisted the help of a social worker who was getting her advanced education in sexual abuse and took this on with relish, convincing them that the young woman was severely traumatized, even if she didn't realize it, and that Uriah should be punished to the maximum and made an example of. All excuses aside, the incident should not have happened, and it was a good learning experience for Uriah about how one can slip when stressed. He was clear with himself that it would never happen again. He was ashamed and humiliated about it and expected to receive retribution from the courts, but let the punishment fit the crime. He has paid and paid and paid and now he is dead at 44. The Prosecutor, judge and defense attorney all agreed he should not be on the Sex Offender Registry for this, but on probation. However, as required by the State Law he was placed on the Sex Offender Registry.

Being on the Sex Offender Registry marks all its registrants with one broad stroke as sexual predators, pedophiles, and deviants. It automatically conjures up terrifying images of dangerous perverts. It ruined my son's life. It is so extremely hard to get and keep legitimate employment, housing, child support, credit and on and on. He carried tremendous shame and felt an outcast and isolated in our culture and utterly defeated in the hope ever getting justice or moving forward with his life. We investigated petitioning the court several times over the years and were consistently informed that there was no pathway for that for him. The law as written did not give any way off the registry even if a person shows they are not a threat to commit another sex offense or that time has passed showing they are not a threat any longer. The difficulties and shifting requirements for registration at that time and the difficulties of trying to decipher which category he fell into and it's requirements meant that he fell through the cracks and ended up in jail for failure to register correctly. He served 6 months or so and was released on good behavior and achieved his GED while in there. After repeated failures in his life because he was on the Sex Offender Registry he eventually gave up trying to live in society and went underground, living in several different places where he was not

on a public registry and working under the table to basically survive. It also meant he did not have health care insurance. He eventually became so afraid of being arrested, paranoia of some type set in and the effort just to try to keep his head above water. A peace lover with a big heart, a vegetarian his whole life, who sipped herbal teas, throughout the day. He worked hard at whatever employment he could find and was strong and lean. He loved people, loved to laugh, loved family. His being on the Sex Offender Registry both directly and indirectly greatly destroyed his life and has caused great pain to us, his family, his children, his relationship with his children and his self-esteem. It is such a needless waste of a precious life. Few can withstand being branded a pariah. He struggled on for years bearing this scarlet letter and it eventually took its toll. On December 8, 2019 he died in his sleep. He seemed so healthy, but an autopsy revealed Coronary artery disease and cocaine in his system. He was not a person who would use cocaine. He was not alone, and people who had been with him earlier in the night said he seemed fine but had a cough. He had suffered from teeth problems having not seen a dentist in years and had abscessed teeth off and on. My husband, a physician, had prescribed antibiotics for him to get him through until he could get to a dentist, but only with the understanding that he would seek help from whatever the state agency where he lived could provide for him. He never went, too afraid to be put in jail for failing to register as a sex offender. It explains the probable reason for cocaine in his system, being the best pain killer for tooth pain. I think he was heartbroken and exhausted from trying to just live his life being on the Sex Offender Registry. There is no limit to the amount of pain this has caused me as his mother and his children.

We will never get over losing him.

His children still live under the stigma and shame of having a father on the Sex Offender Registry. There is no getting him back but I hope I can get his name removed from the registry and his record cleared up so that it does not follow his children and haunt them for something that never should have happened to him or them or his friends and family that love him. I do not want this to follow his name and life as his legacy.

He was guilty of a mistake but not one deserving 25-years on the sex offender registry. Mistakes are how we learn in this world, who has not made mistakes they regret, but this registry as punishment was and is strictly punitive. I am submitting this written testimony because this is just too hard for me to talk about in person or on zoom. I hope you will rewrite the Registry laws with a path off, if you have to have a registry make the time on it shorter also consider a person can learn from mistakes they make. Please enter this into the record as me being against HB 5679.

Leslie Tuchman

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