

Senate Majority Committee Clerks

From: Shirletha Norton <shirletha.norton@yahoo.com>
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To: Senate Majority Committee Clerks
Subject: Testimony 07/13/2016 HB5273

Good morning!!

my name is Shirletha Gaskins and my husband chance for parole was recently vetoed by a successor judge. That left our family devastated to come some close to freedom. In 1990, my husband Kimball Gaskins received a parolable lifer sentence for armed robbery.

During his time in prison, he has succeed in the necessary programs. Required by the State of Michigan Department of Corrections.

He has Graduated from Blackstone career and received a certificate in paralegal and is currently attending Jackson Community College with the support from myself and his family as well, He receives good block and work reports, and gets along with staff and prisoners.

Most importantly, he has matured greatly. He was 25 at the time of the offense, did drugs and looked for ways to make easy money.

Now he is a middle-aged man of 52. He understands the seriousness of his behavior and the impact it had on the victims and on his own family also the state of Michigan . He is eager to prove that he is worthy of a shot at redemption.

Kimball has numerous letters of support from his family. If he were to be paroled, I wish for him to be placed with me. I am here today to express my support of House Bill 5273, and to show the positive impact legislation like this might have on my husband and our family and others that have experienced this as well.

The question before all of you this morning is whether or not a successor judge ought to be able to veto a public hearing for a parolable lifer, and therefore prevent parole consideration. The judge who vetoed Kimball does not know him. All he has to go by is the description of the crime in the presentence report, that will never change. But the issue should be whether the person is safe to be release today and whether there is anything for the public to gain from keeping him incarcerated.

I have personally witnessed Kimball's growth and change over the past twenty six years for a person that has known him for well of 32 years And I believe in redemption. Even for very serious crimes, at some point enough punishment is enough. Kimball would never risk going back to prison by committing another crime. He can still have a productive future with the support of people who love him.

We have waited a long time for the board to show interest in releasing Kimball. We understand that just because the parole board decides to hold a public hearing, there is no guarantee they will grant parole. But at least he would have a chance to show who he is today and for those of us who care about him to show our support. A veto by a judge who had no first-hand involvement with the case and who hasn't seen him now as the board has, feels very unfair,

Thank you so much for listening to my side of this issue, and I am happy to answer any questions