PERSONAL ACCOUNTS FROM SURVIVORS
OF PRISON SEXUAL ASSAULTS

THE CHAIRMAN: Our next witness will be Ms. Linda Bruntmyer who was not the object of the assault, but it shows the impact that the assault has on other members of society and families of someone who has been assaulted and we thank you for your presence.

MS BRUNHMYER: Thank you. My name is Linda Bruntmyer and I'm here today to tell you about my son, Rodney. When Rodney was 16, him and his brother set the dumpsters on fire in our in the alley in our neighborhood. The authority decided to make example of Rodney. Even though only about $500 worth of damage was caused by the fire, they sentenced him to eight years in prison.

We were frightened for him from the start. At 16, Rodney was a small guy, only 5'2" and about 125 pounds. And as the first offense offender, we knew he might be targeted by older and tougher inmates.

Rodney wrote us a letter telling us he had been raped. A medical examiner had confirmed the
rape. A doctor found short tears in his rectum and order an HIV test, because he told us one third of the prisoners there was HIV positive, but that was only the beginning.

Rodney knew if he went back into the general population, he would be in danger. He wrote to the authorities requesting to be moved to a safer place. He went through all of the papers, but he was denied. After the first rape, he was returned to the general population. There, he was repeatedly beaten and forced to perform oral sex and raped. He wrote for help again. In his grievance, he wrote a letter, I have been sexually and physically assaulted several times by several inmates. I'm afraid to go to sleep, to shower or just about anything else. I am afraid that when I am doing these things, I might die at any time. Please, sir, help me.

The officials told him that he did not meet what they call emergency criteria. We all tried to get him help to a safe place. I called the warden trying to figure out what was going on. They said Rodney needs to grow up. He says this happens
every day, learn to deal with it. It's no big
thing.

We were -- so that he would be put into
segregation. After he was finally put into
segregation, we had about a ten-minute phone
conversation. He was crying and he said, mama, I'm
emotionally and mentally destroyed. That was the
last time I heard his voice.

On the night of January 26th, 1996, my son
and hung himself in his cell. He was 17 and afraid
and ashamed and helpless. He laid in a coma for the
next four months before he died.

Nine years have gone since we lost Rodney, but
my family still suffers by what happened to him.
My children are no not as they were before. One of
my children will start crying for no reason at all.
My sweet little daughter has a don't mess with me
attitude and walks around angry all the time. She
was very close to Rodney and to this day we have to
watch what we say about him to her.

When we go to his grave yard, it is very hard
for her to leave. Sometimes she tries to dig out
the grave with her fingers. When it first
happened, I was very angry too at everyone. I still sometimes go to be crying. I wake up crying, what could I have done different to prevent this from happening, but I learned to let myself sit back and focus.

I understand why Rodney did what he did. If I was in his shoes, I probably would have done the same thing just to escape. I tell people not to feel sorry for me. I learned to deal with it by using my anger to help prevent this from happening to others.

I know that it is still happening. We know that what happened to Rodney could have been prevented. There are ways to protect vulnerable inmates, a way to respond to the needs of prisoners who are being sexually assaulted, even though many of the prisoners are still being sexually abused across the country every day.

Rodney tried to ask for help and I tried too and nothing was done. Rape in prison should not be tolerated. It destroys human dignity. It spreads disease and it makes people more angry and violent, it kills. It is too late to help my son, but there
is help for out for other prisoners in this situation.

Rodney did not deserve to be beaten. He did not deserve to be raped. He did not deserve to die. Please make sure what happens to Rodney never happens again. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much,

Ms. Bruntmyer.