

To the Idaho Legislature –

My grandson has been sentenced to ten years in prison for trafficking, and the sentence has devastated our family. He is, unfortunately an addict, but not a dealer. The amount he was arrested with mandated, under the Mandatory Minimum law, that the sentence be ten years in prison. He did not sell heroin. He went before Judge Jason Scott, who said “I don’t think you were trafficking”, but Judge Scott had no power to render any other verdict other than guilty, and impose the 10 year sentence. Our family, in court for the sentencing, was appalled. We are new to the system, and as a family, did not comprehend why, if the judge did not think he was guilty of trafficking, he still sentenced him to ten years in prison. Judge Scott was sympathetic, but was powerless to help.

I have spent the last few months visiting my grandson many times on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, offering hope, love and support in an effort to maintain a positive outlook on the years he will be away from his family. And it worked. We laughed, cried and played cards. I was able to help him maintain, in the face of adversity, a reason to go on. Then he was relocated to Texas. And I have heard in his voice, those hopes diminish. He just doesn’t sound the same. I hear him giving up. He said to me “my life is over”. At twenty four years old, he is expressing no hope for the future. His living conditions are deplorable, the water, last tested over four years ago, barely meets the standards for human consumption. In order to avoid health hazards, I have requested he purchase bottled water.

We are up against the biggest fight of our lives. We cannot afford to allow him to give up hope, and yet we are powerless to provide him with the tools to persevere, when he has had his family taken away from him, when he has been relocated thousands of miles away without the weekly support of his family. Ten years to a twenty four year old is a life time. In ten years he will be re-entering a world where technology has passed him by and he has lost his connections to his community.

I have heard the phrase “no one size fits all” many times over the last few days and I believe it to be so. A life altering sentence has been imposed on my grandson, when in fact he was not trafficking. How do you explain this to a boy and expect his reaction to be anything but hopeless? How much more can you take away from him and our family.

So many tears have been shed over this young boy’s fate, and the fate of our family. When I talk to him, all I can say is “I’m sorry this is happening to you”, and his response is silence. He knows his fate is sealed. One of the representatives said he hoped his children would follow a positive path, but if they didn’t, he hoped there would be compassion and understanding if they themselves were in an adverse situation. All of us have made mistakes we wish we could change, I know I have. My grandson will spend ten years in prison. And so will our family. All other crimes allow judges to set a sentence that makes sense based on the facts of the case. Not with trafficking. It makes no sense.

I am not asking you to release my grandson from prison. I am asking you to let the judge have the authority to judge. He is the only person who has ability to make an informed and just decision as to the fate of the offender.

Susann Ingman, Grandmother