

*****This is an Open Letter to Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg*****

June 10, 2022

District Attorney Bragg,

As you know, on October 19, 2018, my 35-year-old son, and retired U.S. Army Veteran, Sgt. Hason S. Correa was violently murdered by a group of thugs and left to die on the streets of New York City. Remarkably, Hason survived the battlefields of Afghanistan, only to be violently killed on the streets of NYC in a flurry of violence, all captured on video. More than a loving son and soldier, Hason was also a young father to my grandchildren, Jayson (12), Jordan (9), and Jailani(6). They will grow up without a father – but we prayed they would not grow up without justice. You have ensured that they will have neither.

When Hason was stabbed to death, our community and our family felt the murder weapon plunge into all of our hearts. **Instead of prosecuting the thugs who murdered my son, you took that knife out and stabbed us in the back. You violated my rights as a crime victim to be fully informed, and to be heard.**

Victims' rights have been recognized in New York State, in documents such as, "The Rights of Crime Victims in New York State" and in certain laws such as Criminal Procedure Law § 380.50 and New York Executive Law § 642. These laws are designed to ensure that victims and their families are not forgotten, that their voices are heard, and that victims have rights, even if a wayward District Attorney does not believe that victims voices matter.

- I. **Executive Law §642 states that "the victim of a violent felony offense shall...be consulted by the district attorney in order to obtain the view of the victim regarding the disposition of the criminal case," "or in the case of a homicide, the district attorney shall...consult for such purpose with the family of the victim."** Here, you and your office chose to not meaningfully consult our family that you were going to dismiss the murder charges against two of the people that murdered my son, until *after* you agreed to that deal with the attorneys representing the defendants. Worse, I was assured that the sentencing of Mary Saunders would take place in late June, which would provide me an opportunity to deliver a Victim Impact Statement. Instead, her plea and sentencing all took place on May 19, 2022, a date that I told your team that I was unavailable due to family obligations.
- II. **Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) §380.50 protects the rights of victims of violent felonies to be heard, and to make a Victim Impact Statement at the time of sentencing. Specifically, you violated my rights as a victim by:**
 - a. Failing to properly inform us of all necessary information to exercise our right to make a Victim Impact Statement ensuring we had an opportunity to do so (CPL § 380.50); and,
 - b. Failing to provide the sentencing Court with the required notice that our family would like to make a Victim Impact Statement (CPL § 380.50(2)(b)).

As a result, my voice is absent from the transcript at Mary Saunder's sentencing, which took place without me on May 19, 2022.

Why did you not want the Judge to hear our voice? Why did you not want the public to hear what our family thought about the dismissal of murder charges against two individuals who, the prior administration and homicide prosecutors said, were clearly responsible? More, why would you dismiss murder charges against half of the participants, when the murder and their roles were caught on video?

Before you were ever sworn into office, the Manhattan District Attorney's Office's homicide prosecution team described the case against Mary Saunders in starkly different terms on December 18, 2019:

"Judge, it is not a minor point, however, that [Mary Saunders] was involved in a gang assault and a brutal murder. While she's facing 25 years to life on the murder and even if she's only convicted of gang assault, she's still facing five to 25 years on that. This is an extremely brutal, very serious crime. And as your Honor is aware it's all captured on video. Judge, we feel this is a strong case, and that the individual's exposure is very significant.

And, Judge, you know, I would just point out that in the video which I know your Honor reviewed, Ms. Saunders is clearly on this video. She's clearly part of the incidents that lead up to this gang assault. Her brother is very clearly brandishing a weapon. It's very clear on the video that he repeatedly stabbed the decedent in this case. The decedent was stabbed 11 times. And for all of that, Ms. Saunders very clearly participates, punches and kicks the victim, and as the victim is trying to flee and escape the situation she's running after him and tries to catch him, continues to chase him across the street."

- *Transcript of People of the State of New York vs. Mary Saunders, Indictment No. 3916/18, December 18, 2019.*

What has changed since December 2019, besides the person in charge of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office? The video did not change. The evidence did not change. The penal law did not change.

On January 1, 2022, you were sworn into office, and entrusted to faithfully follow and enforce the laws of New York State. Since that date, you have systemically marginalized victims and victims' families and have contributed to plummeting New York City into chaos and higher crime. On May 19, 2022, your office stood in an empty courtroom, without the victims present, and told a completely different account about Mary Saunders and her role in the murder of my son to a Judge. In doing so, you misled the Court, and signaled to the criminal elements in our communities, that you can murder a person on video, and still get away with it on DA Alvin Bragg's watch.

The video, the facts, the evidence, and the law about the murder did not change in three years – the only thing that changed was the District Attorney. Our family and our community deserve better.

Sincerely,

Madeline Brame, Chairwoman
Victims Right Reform Council
Sgt. Hason's Mom

CC: NYS Office of Victims Services
NYS Governor
NYS Attorney General
NYS Assembly
NYC Mayor
US House Judiciary Committee
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