

Good morning to the members of the committee. I appreciate you granting me the time and space to speak. Thank you for your attendance.

My name is Cheryl Minter.  
I am the mother of Stephanie Nicole Minter.

I would like to open today's subject: Stephanie Nicole Minter, with a poem:

“Every good painting will take a million strokes.

To make a good song, you have to go mining to find the perfect notes.

And a castle is created stone by stone with patience and care, because great leaps come with small steps and time. “

This poem comes from my favorite coffee cup, gifted to me by Stephanie. We would share a cup of coffee during early mornings. We butted heads like every other mother-daughter, but wanted to actively take steps together to make our relationship better. We would share stories, memories, laughter, thoughts of the future, and more. This is something I will never get to experience again because of the failures of our justice system.

Stephanie was my daughter, my heart.  
She was a loving mother, a daughter, sister an auntie, a friend, and a mentor.  
She believed in God. She cared for people. She showed up for others, even when she was tired.  
Stephanie was my memory, since mine isn't all that great anymore. She always knew the right bible verse for any situation. Always smiling, always joyful, and always loved life even through the bad times.

Stephanie was a woman who faced many battles in life. She always came out the other side of tough times with that bright smile on her face. That same smile is something I will never be able to see again. A smile the world will never be able to bear witness to again.

On February 24, 2026, I woke up to the worst call a parent can ever receive.  
My daughter was gone.  
Taken in the most horrific way while simply waiting for a bus in Fairfax County on the night of February 23, 2026.

No mother should have to stand here and say these words.  
No family should have to bury their child like this.

Stephanie's life mattered.  
Her voice mattered.  
Her future mattered.

And today, I stand here because her life was taken in a way that should have never happened.

The man who took my daughter's life should not have been free to walk the streets.  
He had been picked up many times.  
He was known.  
There were warnings.  
There were emails sent saying he was a danger.

And still, he was released.

I am not here for politics.  
I am here for accountability.  
I am here because a system failed my daughter.

If not for these failures, I could be sharing a cup of coffee with Stephanie this morning, rather than speaking with you all today.

When policies protect people who are a known threat, innocent lives are put at risk.  
When warnings are ignored, families like mine pay the price.

This is not just about my Stephanie.  
This is about every mother.

Every parent.  
Every child.  
Every person who waits at a bus stop, walks home, or goes to work, trusting they will be safe.

We cannot ignore this.  
We cannot look away.

Compassion should never come at the cost of public safety.  
Care for one group should not mean danger for another.

We can be a community that is both caring and responsible.  
We can have policies that protect people and also keep our streets safe.

But that means we must act.  
We must listen when there are warnings.  
We must take threats seriously.  
We must make sure that people who are dangerous are not released back into our neighborhoods.

I will carry my daughter's name for the rest of my life.  
I will carry her memory.  
But I should not have to carry this pain because of preventable failure.

Stephanie deserved to come home that day.  
She deserved to watch her child grow.  
She deserved more time.

I am asking you, please do not let her story be ignored.  
Do not let another family stand where I am standing.

Make changes.  
Take responsibility.  
Protect your community.

Because no mother should ever have to wake up to this nightmare.

Thank you.