

House of Representatives, Judicial Committee

Witness Statement: Lorie Mohs

Good afternoon Chairman Biggs, Ranking member Shelia Jackson Lee and distinguished members of the House of Representatives, Judiciary Committee. My name is Lorie Mohs and I am grateful for the opportunity to share my sons story with you today. My son, Blake Mohs was born on January 14, 1997 and was murdered April 18, 2023 at the young age of 26. In my sons short 26 years, he was a chef, Eagle Scout, church youth leader, Newark Police Department Cadet; but most of all he was a friend, nephew, cousin, grandson, bother and son.

Blake lived a life of community service, dedication to fighting for the underdog, and love for his family. He lived life to the fullest every day, laughing often and giving the best hugs imaginable.

In early 2022, Blake became an asset protection associate for Home Depot. He worked to gain additional experience before applying for the Newark Police. When Blake and I spoke on our every Wednesday calls, he would tell me about his training at Home Depot. He would explain that he was trained to locate shoplifters within the store, document their actions, track the shoplifter through the store, chase them out of the store and apprehend them. He would bring the shoplifter back into the store to complete a theft report, take their photo and release them to the police if the value of theft warranted.

When I asked my son about the risks of his new job with Home Depot and if you were provided any Personal Protective Equipment, He quickly would declare "No". I would ask if he had been issued a bullet proof vest, pepper spray or safety gear and he would again declare "No".

During many of our calls we would talk about the level of theft he experienced within Home Depot. Blake would tell of the theft rings he would help gather evidence for the local police departments on and how excited he was to work with the officers.

Blake would tell me about the many weapons he had pulled out on him, including knives and guns by shoplifters. When I asked about how he could manage to be safe, Blake would tell me that he could simply hide behind a post or items to avoid being hurt or shot at.

As a mom, my concerns began to grow at the lack of personal protective equipment (PPE) he had been issued by Home Depot.

All of my concerns and fears were realized by one phone call on Tuesday, April 18, 2023... The voice over the phone declared that my son had been shot. I quickly made a call to Eden Medical where Blake had been transported to, to get an update. When speaking with the Emergency doctor I asked how my son was, I urged to speak with Blake, but the doctor simply said to come as quickly as I could.

I then asked, "Do I need to gather the family?"

The answer was clear and simple "yes" the doctor declared. At that moment I knew my son was gone.

On April 18, 2023 at about 2:15 pm, my son, Blake Mohs was shot at close range by a shoplifter while working as an asset protection officer at Home Depot in Pleasanton, California. My son and his teammate had been called into action, as Benicia Knapp was attempting to steal a charger from the tool department. My son encountered Ms Knapp at the back of the store, where her get-away driver David Guillory was waiting for her to flee the store with the stolen item. According to witness statements my son took the item from Ms Knapp and walked back into the store. Ms Kapp followed my son back into the store and when he turned back around, she pulled out her ghost gun from her purse and shot my son in the heart. He fell face forward to the ground and dropped the item. Ms Kapp picked up the item from his dead body and fled in the getaway car.

In the days to come we would learn that David Guillory, the getaway driver was a felon. He had served time in jail for a home invasion robbery but was released early during COVID.

We learned that Benicia Knapp, my son's executioner had been in and out of trouble with the police since 1995. She has been in violation of probation since 2012, but still roaming the streets free. She also had a concealed to carry gun permit that was revoked along with her security guard card in years past.

For both Guillory and Knapp's, the judicial system had failed to rehabilitate them properly. The system failed to keep them accountable for their previous actions, leading to the escalation in criminal behavior, led to the shooting death of my son.

The system has failed because instead of rehabilitating criminals, we release them early, do not execute the proper charges in court, or we fail to seek the probation violator.

The system also failed my son- He was asked to do a job with a small wage and high risk, leading to his death. Home Depot failed to provide proper protection to secure his safety when carrying out his required duties. OSHA failed to make safety a priority for asset protection officers and mandate bullet proof vests.

The System failed Blake future-self. He will never get to be married, have a child, he will never grow old, or buy a house.... We will never get to hear his laughter; we will never feel his huge hugs. We will never get to say to him "I love you son! I am proud of you!" and hear him say he loves us.

What we do have are the wonderful 26 years of memories that were cut too short by, the failing of so many that could have prevented his death.

We hope that our story, Blake's story, helps this committee understand the importance and the urgency for change.