Stella Getgen
[redacted]

My husband was murdered by Raymond Peake 16 years ago. He was sentenced to life in prison with no possibility of parole for second degree murder after a nolo contendere plea. Our pain and sorrow are never far from the surface and the thought that the person responsible for taking Todd's life may be released from prison is unbearable.

My son's life changed completely on July 21, 2010 at the tender age of 6 years old. That morning, his father dropped him off at the YMCA summer camp in Camp Hill - both not knowing it would be the last hug, the last goodbye, the last "I love you. He asked me why the man killed his father. I told him that the man wanted his dad's rifle that he was using at the range. My son then said "Why didn't he just ask Dad if he could borrow it? Dad would have let him borrow it. He didn't have to kill him." I had to explain to my young son that there are certain people who are capable of acts so violent and cruel that they cannot be trusted to live among us. I told him this with the confidence that Todd's murderer would never be released from prison. Now we have to relive the trauma all over again.

Todd was a devoted father, committed husband, son, brother, uncle. He was an attorney in Dauphin County and we made our home in Enola, Cumberland County. He was born and raised in Lycoming County, was valedictorian of his high school, and graduated with honors from Penn State. He served in the US Army, 10th Mountain Division. His family didn't have a lot of money, but he worked hard, played by the rules, and became an attorney.

I tell you all this so you know the kind of man who was taken from us. I don't have a fancy title, I'm not wealthy, and I don't have power. I'm a mom and a widow who is hoping that those who are in power make the right decision and keep this murderer in prison. It's frustrating to hear the word "fairness" or "compassion" being applied to a murderer's sentence. Where was the "fairness" or "compassion" when that man decided to end Todd's life?

The loss my son experienced and continues to experience is unfathomable - no father to ask for advice, or talk to about life's joys and disappointments, or go on trips with, or share milestones with. I worked tirelessly to raise him to be a responsible, caring, generous, and resilient young man. It wasn't easy as a single mom. He is graduating this summer from the University of Pittsburgh with an electrical engineering degree. He's endured more suffering and hardship than any young man should have to experience in his formative years.

I want you to explain to my son why you want to show compassion to the person who took his father from him at such an early age. Please show the same compassion to my son and my family who follow the laws, play by the rules, work hard every day, pay taxes, and contribute to society?

Raymond Peake was 64 years old when he murdered Todd. He has served 16 years of a life sentence. He is 80 years old now, but he should continue to serve out his life sentence for taking a life.

I am pleading with you to draft legislation that would ensure that those who committed murder continue to serve out their life sentences with absolutely no chance of parole. I want your commitment that you won't support a bill that would allow Todd's murderer an opportunity for freedom, an opportunity to spend time with his family - opportunities he took from my son and my family.

Please think of your own children and imagine their lives if they had to grow up without you. That's the life my son has lived.

Regards.
Stella Getgen