

Opening Statement to the Judiciary Committee

By Mia Alderman, the Grandmother of Mary Collins

Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Mia Alderman, and I am the grandmother of Mary Collins, who was sadistically tortured and brutally murdered in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2020.

Mary was only 20 years old when her life was taken in the most horrific way imaginable, including being stabbed over one hundred thirty times.

Our family has now endured more than five years of waiting, and still, her case has not gone to trial. Five years is not justice. Five years is torment.

Every day of delay deepens the wound for our family and makes a mockery of accountability.

What makes this even more unbearable is how the justice system has handled those accused of Mary's murder.

Two of them were released on bond, as if their crimes were minor. One in particular, America Ray Diehl, remains free on bond today. Despite repeated violations of her curfew and ankle monitor conditions, she has faced little to no consequence. We know she has broken curfew, left her home, and pushed the boundaries of the very system meant to contain her—and yet nothing is done. How can someone accused of such cruelty walk free, while we, Mary's family, serve a life sentence of grief?

The failures did not begin in the courtroom; they began when Mary was killed. For days, family, friends, and the community pleaded for help. We begged the detective to intervene, to check on her, to rescue her. It was long and torturous to get him to even go through that apartment door where she lay wrapped in plastic and concealed inside a mattress.

That delay cost precious time, and it compounded the horror of what we later learned had happened inside.

Justice delayed is justice denied. And time is stealing our justice with the backlogged court system for murder trials. Mary is not the only victim.

Iryna Zarutskya, was also brutally stabbed and killed in Charlotte. And now brings us here today. It should not have happened this way. The same system that failed Mary, failed Iryna. Our hearts are broken for her family and her friends. We grieve with them, and we carry the heavy knowledge of the continued agony they now face.

This is not just about two young women. It is about a justice system in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina that is failing the very people it is sworn to protect.

We need accountability. We need reform. We need to ensure that those accused of heinous crimes are swiftly prosecuted. That they are not allowed to be released on bond where they violate conditions of their release again and again without consequence.

We need to ensure that families are not left waiting year after year, caught in a limbo of heartbreak and broken promises.

Mary was my granddaughter. She was a daughter, sister, family member and friend. She was vulnerable, but she was also full of life and trust. That trust was betrayed, and her murderers exploited it.

Our family has lived in anguish for more than half a decade, while those responsible still have not faced a jury.

I sit before you today for Mary and for every family who has lost someone to violence and then has been failed again by the system that should deliver justice.

I ask you to see Mary not just as another case number, but as a voice calling out for change.

Thank you for hearing me, and for recognizing the urgency of justice that has been denied for far too long.