

I submitted a request to speak at the hearing. I wanted to clarify why I asked to speak, in hopes that it will clarify my request, and why I feel I have a unique position from my life experience.

For many years, my father was the administrator of Men's homes. One in Corpus Christi, TX and another in Pikeville, TN.

In the homes, he had men that were out of prison but didn't want to return to their previous environments, or that were court ordered to get their lives straight, get off drugs, or learn how to transition back into society.

I've seen firsthand the type of men that come into the homes, and seen many change for the better. But I've also seen some terrible things many continue to do.

I hate to seem like I stereotype criminals and drug addicts - but the truth is, if they're in a rehab, half-way house, Transitional home, whatever you want to call it - it's because they, their family, or a judge in most cases, has asked that they attend because of their actions. Most of the time it's a requirement of parole.

My family and I lived on the property that the Men's home was on in both Corpus Christi, TX and Pikeville, TN. Our house was far enough away that they'd never see us outside the home, coming and going, or through windows, etc. But in Texas we attended a church that was on the same property as the men's home.

My father was very careful not to allow the men out of the building except to work, but the truth was, that even three full time employees have to go home and sleep at some point, and the men were left to keep themselves accountable. And the majority of the time, that just didn't happen. I could tell you so many stories of times my dad had to go pick up a man from town that ran off and got in trouble, or had to send them away because of their conduct...

The summer after my senior year of high school, before I left for college in the fall - One of the young men in the home raped my sister. She was 16.

Everyone thought he was an upstanding, good man - from his excellent conduct in the home, obeying all the rules, talking about his plans to work in a church when he "graduated" and went back home.

The truth is, there are people like that everywhere. But opening up the opportunity for a home specifically for convicts, addicts and criminals - right in our neighborhood, is opening up more than we are prepared to deal with. And something that makes a lot of residents fearful. We allow our kids to ride their bikes down the road, play ball in the vacant lot, we leave our houses empty to go to work, or some women stay home with their small children. The truth is, we're all vulnerable to be taken advantage of, hurt or robbed any time - there will always be criminals. But inviting a group of known criminals and addicts to move across the street is a different danger all-together.

In my experience, the men in Pikeville TN did much better as far as their conduct and ability to transition - because they weren't allowed in town without a chaperone. They lived, worked, prepared and ate meals, and did everything there on the property. There was about 12 acres, and one road in and out.

I very strongly feel like this organization needs to find somewhere more remote, away from neighborhoods and temptations, and allow them to simply focus on their progress.

You might be wondering, what's the worst that can happen? I can promise you that It will happen eventually. Then what?

What if it were your home, your family? What if your worst fears for your children came true? Would you not fight to prevent every circumstance you could that would allow that to happen?