

Dear Judge Randal,

Hi, my name is Dakota and I'm 12 years old. I wanted to tell you about Brandon. He has become a really important person in my life. He's like a dad to me, especially because my real dad isn't around. Brandon is always showing up for me in everything, and it feels like I finally have a dad who cares.

I have always seen my mom doing everything all the time, but now Brandon helps out a lot. He's always there to support us and make sure we're okay. Every time I have to cheerlead at a game or really anything I have, even if it is super boring and long Brandon is always there to support me. If he has to go to prison, it would make everyone really sad, me, my mom, his daughter Laila, and all my friends. Brandon is a good person, and I don't want to see him leave back to that bad place. Brandon talks to me and my friends about making good choices and staying out of trouble. He uses his life examples and some stories from what he learned in prison too, to help us understand things better. I've learned a lot from him and I know he's a really nice guy who cares about making choices that will keep him away from getting into trouble. We go to church every Sunday and one time I remember him talking to our Pastor about what he has done and that he is sorry for what he did wrong in his life.

He's an amazing dad to his daughter, Laila, and they're really close. When he came home from jail and she never wanted to leave from our house because she loves her dad so much and missed him a lot. She told me stories about how when he was away that he still helped her on the jail phones with homework and made sure she always had fun but still has memories without him. Since he has been home, she has been able to make a lot of new memories with Brandon. We went to a local water park and the movies for Laila's birthday. Brandon always goes to the park to play with Laila and I and takes us on daddy daughter dates at our favorite restaurants. Laila has been through a lot and she is younger than me. I am a big sister to her and every time she is sad when she has to leave her dad I have to hold her and wipe her tears so she can go home with her mom. Even since he has been home she cries when she has to leave him to go to her mom's house. If Brandon has to go away, Laila will be so sad, and I don't want to see her heartbroken. Laila is a part of my family now and if Brandon goes away her mom won't let us see her so I don't know when we will be able to see her again. I am scared how I will be able to be her and support her because I know she is going to be very sad and feel like it is her fault too.

I have never had a dad before my mom let me meet Brandon. When he picks me up from school, other kids always say how nice and cool my dad is and I used to think it was weird but it is true because he is my dad now. He is nice enough to help kids at my school train for football and also shows up for some of their games because they do not have dads and look at Brandon as a good role model in their life. He always tells the boys to focus on school first so that when they want to play football in college their grades will pave the way. He tells them no matter how good you are on the field, it matters how good you are as a person too. He is having a free training day this weekend and like 50 kids are showing up to hear him talk and learn new football skills which I think is pretty cool even though I do not play football.

I hope you can see how much Brandon means to me, the other kids at my school and my family. He's made a big difference in our lives, and I know he's a good person who just made some mistakes. Please think about how much he cares about us before making a decision.

Thank you for listening to me.

From,

Dakota