Dear Judge Lewis A. Kaplan,

My name is Cynthia Lewis, and I am Chanette Lewis's mother. I am 52 years old and currently unemployed due to medical problems. I am undergoing adjuvant chemotherapy treatment.

I usually call Chanette "Stevann." She has a kind heart, and has always been the strongest of my 3 children. I was a young mother, so it was difficult learning how to parent, and I'm still learning today. I blame myself at times because, being a young mother, I wasn't perfect. Both sides of my family have mental health problems like bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, so it got passed down.

When I had my children, I didn't want to treat my symptoms of schizophrenia, so Chanette witnessed most of my episodes because she was always around me. I wish it was different, but I also came in contact with human immunodeficiency virus as the result of an abusive relationship I was in. Once I caught that at the age of 23, I wasn't mentally strong enough to take care of my children. I lost custody of my first child, Jeffrey Ghee, because I wasn't stable enough emotionally and mentally.

Years later, I met my fiancé Bertram Clark. He was working at the doctor's office I went to for HIV treatment, and we got into a relationship. He helped me take care of my children, but later down the line he passed away because he also had cancer and AIDS. He was my daughter's role model. He died just after she turned 14, and he was in her life from the time she was 2 years old. After this, I noticed a change in my daughter's life. She was not a problem child, and many times came home with good grades. She just hid her pain well and had manic outbursts at times. As she's gotten older, Chanette's mental health has gotten worse. But now, she's in treatment and she tells me she loves talking to her therapist so I see a lot of change.

I wish she had a better childhood and didn't have to live with the fact that I'm sick. My daughter, Cynthia Lewis, is also sick with HIV. My daughters' biological father also died from an overdose in March 2023. Her husband died a year before in January 2022. Chanette always says how when she's sad in front of her kids, their behavior changes. So I notice my daughter trying to remain strong for my grandchildren.

Chanette is a really caring person. I remember when my social worker told her I had HIV, she tried to cook for me daily, reminded me to take my medication, and would even call me during school hours just to tell me she loved me. My daughter was trying to be my caregiver from a young age. When I used to get sick, she would make me soup and clean up my vomit. In 2022, when I was diagnosed with brain cancer,

she never missed coming to my doctor's appointments and asking so many questions. Despite the trauma and pain she's been through, her heart is pure.

I'm actually proud of my daughter. Since this case, she's worked hard on her mental health treatment and is my main caregiver. Since I got diagnosed with brain cancer, Stevann has taken care of me. She has always been caring, loving, and forgiving. She has a good heart, despite her mistakes. She learns. I've seen the way this case has affected her. Many times she gets depressed and speaks about her kids being alone if she gets sent to jail. I can see that my daughter is trying to change and become a better person.

Stevann tells me about how she wants to own a business and go back to college to get her bachelor's. Whether it takes her a couple of months or years, my daughter always goes for her goals. Still, this case has taken a toll on her. She tries to spend all her time with her kids and taking up more hours at work to take care of her family. I believe she's learned from her mistake and is changing for the better.

We are all each other has. Please give her another chance so she can continue to be the caring mother and helpful child that I know she is.

Thank you,

Cynthia Lewis Sr
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