

Honorable members of the Michigan State Legislature,

My name is Paula Kensu and today I'm speaking on behalf of my husband Temujin Kensu, as well as from Proving Innocence who has supported him for many decades. I stand before you not just as an advocate for justice, but as the wife of a man who has endured decades of pain, and as I witness the love of my life, Temujin Kensu, suffer behind bars for a crime he did not commit. Imagine for a moment, the person you hold dearest, trapped in a nightmare through no fault of their own, their pleas for justice muffled by the cold walls of a cell.

The Second Look legislation we discuss today is not merely a policy proposal; it is a lifeline for families torn apart by the failings of our justice system. This legislation ensures that mistakes can be corrected, that evidence can be reevaluated, and that the years stolen from innocent individuals like my husband can be acknowledged and it is especially important now more than ever given gaps such as timing technicalities that have nothing to do with actual innocence.

The safeguards within this legislation are stringent. It does not open the floodgates for the guilty to walk free but provides a meticulously structured path for the deserving few to have their cases reexamined. Those who have served a decade can petition, and if denied, face years before they can petition again. It explicitly excludes individuals convicted of heinous crimes, ensuring that only those truly deserving are considered. Most importantly, it gives victims and their families a voice in the process, ensuring that their pain is not overlooked or forgotten.

This legislation is balanced, thoughtful, and necessary. Every day, I watch the man I love lose another piece of himself to despair. Every day he calls me and asks me why he is still in prison and this breaks my heart. It makes me not want to take his calls when I have no good answer. Yet, in the face of such injustice, he maintains his dignity and hope, clinging to the belief that one day, someone will listen, someone will care enough to look again.

The Second Look legislation is our hope for that day. This isn't just about Temujin; it's about what we stand for as a society. Do we turn a blind eye to injustice, or do we strive to correct our mistakes? Do we allow families to be shattered, or do we offer them a glimmer of hope? This legislation represents that hope, not only for my family but for countless others enduring the same relentless nightmare.

I implore you, with every ounce of strength I have left, to support the Second Look legislation. Let us be a beacon of justice and humanity, showing the world that in Michigan, we value truth, we cherish fairness, and we believe in second chances. Thank you for hearing my plea, for considering the lives behind the cases, and for the opportunity to bring about change that can heal so many broken hearts and broken families.

May we all have the courage to do what is right.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Paula Kensu