

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 16, 2020

The Honorable William Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Barr,

We write to you today regarding reports of the release of convicted felon Robert R. Courtney, which has raised questions and concerns for the victims of his crimes.

It has been reported that Courtney's victims have been notified that Bureau of Prisons has approved his release from imprisonment seven years early. We understand that he was approved for release pursuant to directives regarding potential inmate home confinement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has been reported that this decision was made because of concerns about his health and because he is at "minimal risk of recidivating." We strongly disagree with this decision.

Courtney was sentenced to 30 years of imprisonment and admitted to diluting at least 72 different drugs over the course of nearly a decade. These included cancer treatment drugs and possibly drugs for AIDS, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, and infertility. Authorities estimated that his crimes could have touched 4,200 patients, 400 doctors, and as many as 98,000 prescriptions.

Courtney's crimes are heinous. As shown by the heart wrenching victim impact statements enclosed with this letter, he inflicted a steep physical and emotional toll upon his victims for personal financial gain. He acted without consideration for the theft of his victims' health and quality of life, and his actions can be described as no less than purposefully evil. Courtney should serve the entirety of his sentence as penance for his crimes—both against his victims and against the public trust in medical care.

The decision to release this individual fails to fully consider the public safety ramifications of his release and the impact that the release will have on his victims.

We ask that the Department of Justice provide an explanation of its decision to release Courtney and strongly urge that the Department reconsider his release.

Sincere regards,



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress



Josh Hawley
United States Senator



Sam Graves
Member of Congress

Enclosed: Victim Impact Statements

Victim Impact Statements

The below victim impact statements are copied from excerpts provided in United States v. Courtney, No. 02-4083 (8th Cir. Apr. 5, 2004). The United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit explained that these are only a glimpse of many more victim impact statements shared by the direct victims of Courtney's crimes.

"Being diagnosed with ovarian cancer and dealing with the fact that you may not be around to see your kids grow up [is hard enough] without having to deal with someone doing this to you. The fear alone is indescribable. You wonder[,] if you would have gotten the medication you were supposed to have[,] if your cancer would have come back or not."

"I have suffered worry, stress[,] and extreme anxiety concerning the recurrence of the disease after the initial period. Would the disease have 'come back' if the initial treatments had been full dosage? We'll never know! I have felt intense anger and related stress from the knowledge of Courtney's deliberate wrong doing directly related to me. Will I be able to conquer this disease or have his actions reduced my odds in any fashion[?] Will my life be shortened by this crime?"

"Emotionally, it has affected me the most. It is a very hard thing to deal with. I lose my self control and cry when I think of Courtney – how he would take someone's life for money."

"Lots of sleepless nights. Lots of stress not knowing what [w]as done to my body. If Gemzar had been a regular chemo (not diluted)[,] I wouldn't have pancreatic cancer on my liver now."

"This crime takes hope away that the treatment was effective and has created doubt. I feel like I have lost peace of mind because I worry about future occurrences of cancer and if I will receive the correct dosing of medicine."

"When I was diagnosed with cancer, I discovered I had to fight an emotional battle as well as a physical one. During this time, I tried to accept that I had a very dangerous set of cells invading my body. Early last fall, I discovered I had another force invading my body. This was one I hadn't counted on. I had to face the reality that someone had purposely diluted the drugs going through my body. I have no idea how it affected my disease, but I felt violated – I felt raped."

"I saw [the doctor] in February of 2001 and began chemo treatments of Taxol and Carboplatin immediately. Because I had responded favorably to these two chemo drugs previously, it was only natural to expect the same response. Unfortunately my health worsened and in March I had to resign from my position [at work]. [The doctor] decided to try a different treatment using Gemzar, but it still didn't improve my situation at all. It wasn't until August of 2001 when I was told I had received diluted chemo drugs from Mr. Courtney's pharmacy that it all made sense why my health was failing. I feel as though my family has been short changed. I feel my whole future has been taken away from me."