



Edna Harris (right) and her ex-husband, Tim.

Here’s how and why on how I have become an advocate for my ex-husband, incarcerated in federal prison. Yes, you read that right: ex-husband. We are still close, and I can’t sit by and watch injustice. The more I ponder on it, the more I think how can I *not* advocate for a man who is terminally ill and has been sent to prison?!

Among many illnesses, Timothy has end-stage renal disease and Crohn’s disease. He is in urgent need of a kidney transplant. He meets criteria for alternatives to incarceration within the federal sentencing guidelines. His “extraordinary and compelling reasons” are terminal illness and debilitating health. He has zero criminal history. And I am frantic that he will die in prison.

Timothy was sentenced on October 24, 2017, in federal district court in Danville, Virginia. I couldn’t even go to court because I knew I could not handle it. Our children and his mother escorted him. I spent every second at Tim’s home in prayer. When they all got home that day,



our children both had glazed looks on their faces. Then Tim came in and calmly said, “Baby, they are sending me to federal prison for 30 months, and I’m thankful they allowed me to come home today.”

I let myself have about four hours for a pity party. Then on the ride back to my own place I had a little talk with the Lord to put me on the right track to advocate for leniency for Tim. That night, I stayed up all night reading about pardons and thousands of pages of Tim’s medical records. That’s how my journey of advocacy began.

I made fruitless appeals to the governor, communicated heavily with Sen. Kaine’s office, and sent countless letters to Tim’s lawyer — none of which were answered. I have sent over 200 letters to President Trump requesting a pardon for Tim, and I only receive a form-letter email that they are in receipt. I created a video and joined Twitter to try and get a message to President Trump in hopes that he would see my plea for help and make a way possible for Tim to be released.

Then one day, I was doing research to understand compassionate release and I came across FAMM. To read and learn about other families experiencing everything we are going through and advocating for their own families was a breath of fresh air. At the same time, it was mentally overwhelming to learn that our situation of incarceration isn’t an isolated incident; this occurs with thousands of people.

Reading FAMM’s website made me even stronger. The warrior within grew even more I read every detail of their commitment in helping people like me understand law. FAMM is family, especially the FAMMilies in Action Facebook page. As an advocate for Tim, I now have a marvelous group of people that I can turn to for moral support. They make this nightmare of incarceration a little more bearable because I no longer feel like we are in this wilderness of





despair alone. I will call upon the staff at FAMM or go to our Facebook page before I would even talk to my own family members.

I will continue to advocate for Tim and against the unjust sentencing he has received, and I appreciate all that the FAMM staff does to work with families for a criminal justice system that's fair and equitable. A major effort was shown in July of this year with a rally on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol and a lobby day meeting with senators. This was a big step toward advocating and encouraging lawmakers to vote for the FIRST STEP Act. It's commonsense reform. The Bureau of Prisons needs to take a hard look at implementing and enforcing compassionate release/reduction in sentence — for my Tim, and for countless others.

UPDATE: Tim was released from prison in early 2020.

By Edna Harris



Tim receiving medical treatment