

My name is Derrell Gauden. I was granted compassionate release on July 19, 2022. I want to thank Chief Judge J. Randal Hall of the Southern District of Georgia and the U.S. Sentencing Commission for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

My father was in the military so I was able to experience a lot of different places when I was young. My family spent 7 years in Germany. When we returned to Georgia in 1987, the Crack epidemic was just beginning. Crack cocaine was coming in from Florida so living in South Georgia made it easy to make millions in this illegal job. So from 1987 to 1997, my twin brother and I did exactly that. Kids with that type of money leads to more bad choices than good ones.

In 1998 my brother and I were indicted by the federal government. We were firm on our decision not to testify against anyone and we both received a 30+ years sentence. At 27 years old, I was sentenced to 387 months in prison.

*I made up my mind to be a better person and took college courses to better myself.*

As I once wrote to my lawyer, "I have been dedicated to change." By 2022, I had worked as a payroll clerk for UNICOR for more than 17 years. By the end of my time there, I handled over six million dollars in payroll each year. My supervisor praised my "commitment, honesty, and hard work" and another one said I was a "a leader and a role model amongst his peers." Chief Judge Hall called my prison record, "extraordinary."

But I was scared of dying in prison. I have a seizure disorder, just like my father did. My father died when he was 44 years old. While I was in prison, my seizures began to occur more frequently and multiple times in the same day. Prison is not the ideal place to be out cold or in need of another person's constant help.

I am so thankful I was granted compassionate release because that allowed me to get the medical care I needed. I am now off all blood pressure medication. My seizure medication has been reduced which helps reduce the negative side effects that I had before.

My prior motion to reduce my sentence based on the changes in crack cocaine sentencing had been denied. I had tried so many ways to be released but all of my motions and petitions were denied.

Compassionate release was finally a way for my lawyers to show the judge the person I had become, the health struggles I was going through, and the reasons I would be an asset to society if released.

The main purpose for a prison sentence is rehabilitation and compassionate release is a way to look at that.

Compassionate release was a blessing to me and my family. But I left so many rehabilitation friends inside the federal system. There are so many people left in prison with harsh sentences who have exhausted all legal remedies on their case. There are so many people incarcerated that are old, sick and most importantly rehabilitated.

Today, I am blessed to be with my family. Compassionate release allowed me to spend time with my daughter before she passed. My daughter passed away on *Nov 30, 2022*. After *23* years apart, my twin brother, who was also granted compassionate release, finally are together!!!

Today I am working *at my wife and myself's company called Righteous hauling.* We are both on the waiting list for Savannah technical college for class A CDL Licenses to strengthen our business.