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S.C. SUPREME COURT

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
COUNTY OF MARLBORO)

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

WELDON W. STEWART JR. #295095)

2023-CP-34-00282

v.)

AFFIDAVIT OF ORIGINAL

FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)

AFFIDAVIT

(SWORN STATEMENT)

DATE: Aug 23, 2024

My legal name is Russell Aubrey Harley, MD ("Affiant"). My address is [REDACTED]

My phone number is [REDACTED]

Being duly sworn, hereby swear under oath that:

On Thursday, December 7, 2000, I performed an autopsy (FA 00686) at MUSC on the remains of [REDACTED]. The history available to me at the time from Marlboro County indicated she had been found burned/charred. She was 15 years old and her boyfriend, Weldon Stewart, was 19. They had an argument at 4:30 a.m., and he said she fell, and he fell on top of her, and she died.

At trial, Stewart told the jury that [REDACTED] pulled out a box cutter and swung it at him. So, Stewart picked her up and started to carry her home. But according to Stewart, as he picked her up, he tripped and fell. He said he fell on top of [REDACTED]. Stewart recalled that she initially sat up, but then began calling Stewart's name. He said her voice became low and that she made "strange sounds" that "didn't sound human." Then Stewart testified that he saw blood coming from her mouth. He knew at that point something was wrong, so he left to find his friend Stanton Wright. Stewart testified that he was drinking a beer and looking for cigarettes when he found Wright. He claimed he told Wright about tripping and falling on [REDACTED]. Wright, however, previously signed a statement saying that Stewart told him that [REDACTED] had sex with someone else before their encounter and did not shower before meeting him. According to the statement, Stewart "flipped out" when he learned this.

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MARLBORO COUNTY, S.C.

At 11:30 a.m. he carried her body to a nearby fiberglass shower stall in a back yard, doused her with gasoline, and burned the body. At 2:30 p.m. he called 911 to report this.

SLED Forensic Services were called to the scene at 5:45 p.m. on 12-6-2000. Field Officer Elvington noted possible blood on a jacket and on leaves. It is not clear to me that the site in the woods where [REDACTED] is alleged to have died was examined by the SLED services.

At autopsy, there was charring of the body with exposure of some organs. There was also a fracture of the right parietal skull with epidural and subdural hemorrhage and exposure of the brain. Otherwise, the brain was intact and appeared normal. Carboxyhemoglobin level was less than 10% saturation consistent with the history that she was dead at the time the body was burned. Sections of brain and dura showed hemorrhage and there were some inflammatory cells suggesting that the skull fracture occurred while she was alive.

Mr. Stewart pled guilty to burning the body but not to a charge of murdering [REDACTED]. He would not accept the court's offer to provide him with counsel and rather chose to represent himself. The jury found him guilty of manslaughter and he was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment as well as 9 years for desecration of human remains.

According to information from Mrs. Lori Stewart, repressed memories emerged to Mr. Stewart including that the deceased [REDACTED] had died of suicide. She had been pregnant at age 14 and underwent a partial birth abortion which left her severely depressed. [REDACTED] had apparently written a letter regarding her extreme depression over the loss of her child at some point before her death.

Also, Mr. Weldon Stewart had childhood trauma including neighbors trying to drown him when he was 10 years old. According to Ms. Stewart, he coped with this by developing dissociative amnesia. Ms. Stewart believes that Mr. Stewart slipped back into this coping mechanism after [REDACTED] died.

Mrs. Lori Stewart arranged for Mr. Stewart to be examined by Lucid Clinical Services, Andi McDaniel, PhD, Clinical and Testing Psychologist and Shea Lott, PhD, supervising Licensed Clinical Psychologist. They concluded that it is very possible that Mr. Stewart experienced dissociative amnesia following the death of [REDACTED].

On December 6, 2000, [REDACTED] was depressed about the one-year anniversary of having had the abortion. [REDACTED] had apparently written a suicide note at some point before her death.

Mr. Stewart, who may have been suffering from dissociative amnesia at the time of his trial, spontaneously recovered his memory that [REDACTED] committed suicide – which Stewart believes occurred by [REDACTED] secretly ingesting something while she distracted him by asking him to get her something to drink. The memories suddenly came back to him. He alleged that he remembered that when [REDACTED] collapsed in his arms after the fall in the woods, “my mouth was on her mouth as she took her last breath; I felt her spirit leaving her.”

There is other information I have not mentioned. One peculiar one is from Mr. Weldon Stewart that addresses the death of [REDACTED] in what sounds like King James biblical language in which he must have been in an altered state of mind.

Mrs. Lori Stewart has hired Dr. James Downs, a forensic pathologist, to review the case. He is of the opinion that the skull fractures were all postmortem and heat related. The body was charred by the heat of the gasoline fire and included a number of fractures from the heat. It was my impression at the time of the autopsy that the right parietal skull fracture was probably caused by blunt force trauma, but I could be wrong. There is the question of why there was not a lot of blood at the alleged site of the injury in the woods. Good question, but was the actual site in the woods identified and examined? Mr. Weldon Stewart seems to believe that [REDACTED] committed suicide by ingestion of some sort of pill. No such pill was found in the stomach fluid, and nothing unusual was found in the blood at the toxicology exam. Whether there is still a sample of stomach fluid that could be examined now is not clear to me. I have no objection to having Dr. Downs examine the pathology slides, but that is really not up to me but to the coroner and to the MUSC Forensic Pathology section. I retired from active work in the Department in 2005. I am now Professor Emeritus and do not sign out cases.

After giving this initial statement to Mrs. Stewart, she provided me with a series of follow-up questions. The first question was essentially asking why there was only a basic toxicology analysis for the autopsy. The toxicology examination for this autopsy was based on the data available at that time. It was not known at the time of the autopsy that there was a question of suicide. Had I known there was a question of suicide, I would have gotten more extensive toxicological studies.

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The second question asked about the significance of [redacted] mental health history. Had I known of the question of [redacted] suicide, I would have wanted to review her mental health records.

The third question was posed as a hypothetical basically asking about the impact of the new evidence on my conclusions from the autopsy. Additional information is required. I am not sure where [redacted] died. Did she and Mr. Stewart walk through some woods? Did Mr. Stewart fall on her? Where did this happen?

Under penalty of perjury, I hereby declare and affirm that the above-mentioned statement is to the best of my knowledge, true and correct.

Affiant's Signature: *Russell A. Harley* Date: 8-23-24



Bridget Welch

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CLERK OF COURT
MARLBORO COUNTY, S.C.

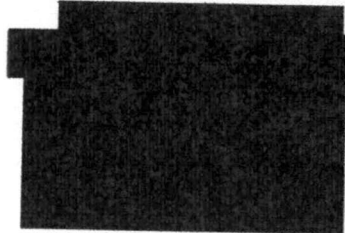
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Forensic Pathology & Lab Services
Courtroom Illustrations & Exhibits
Training & Continuing Education



"To strive, to seek, to find ... and not to yield."

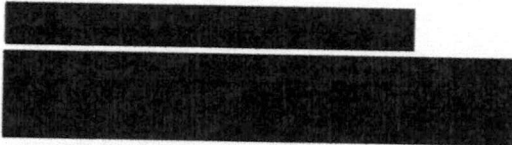


CONSULTATION

Attention:

Date: 31 May 2022

**Dawinder "Dave" S. Sidhu, Esq.
Counsel**



SUBJECT:

S1 = [Redacted]

S2 = Weldon Stewart

CASE:

MUSC FA00-686

Dear Mr. Sidhu,

Thank you for asking me to conduct this review. I have completed my evaluation of the case materials. Please see my attached report.

Should you have any questions and/or should I be able to be of any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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CHARLESTON COUNTY

J.C. [Signature]



2. Observations and opinions:

- Ultimately two major questions arise in the forensic pathology evaluation of this case:

1) Was the described head wound postmortem thermal injury?

The subject clearly has extensive postmortem thermal injury. In addition, there is a described finding that may be associated with a pre-mortem wound but might also be postmortem. Additional materials examination may allow a more specific determination regarding the true nature of this latter finding.

2) Could this death have resulted from Suicide?

Based on the reviewed information, suicide cannot be excluded. Additional materials examination may allow a more specific determination regarding manner of death.

- Manner of death (in this case, suicide versus accident versus homicide) is determined from physical findings associated with investigative findings. In this case, no compelling physical evidence allows the elimination of any of these manners of death as a possibility.

An inadvertent fall, with the head hitting a hard surface or a purposeful similar head injury would appear the same as a head impacted with a hard object as per the autopsy description, therefore insufficient physical data exists to allow elimination of any of these possibilities based on the documented autopsy findings in isolation.

- The decedent has severe thermal injuries, which obscure the presence "or absence" of any potential external premortem trauma.

Extensive evidence of injury (be it pre-mortem or post-mortem, as well as relevant internal findings, were documented in the autopsy report:

EVIDENCE OF INJURY: There is full body charring with exposure of organs (intestine and skull fracture with epidural and subdural hemorrhage.

HEAD AND NECK: A fracture is to the right parietal skull associated with epidural and subdural hemorrhage and exposure of brain.

THORAX AND ABDOMEN: Heat fractures involve the lateral aspects of all ribs. Heat involvement/damage is to the right middle and lower lobes of lung, left upper and lower lobes of lung, 50% of the right lobe and 50% of the left lobe of liver to include the entire superior aspect of the liver, both kidneys with more damage to the right kidney and burning away of the right adrenal gland, and spleen.

UPPER EXTREMITIES: Heat fractures are to both humeri with distal amputation of the left hand.

LOWER EXTREMITIES: Heat fractures are to both femuri [sic] with distal heat amputation of the feet.

HEAD(CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM): The brain weighs 910 grams. Excluding the injuries described under "Evidence of injury", the dura mater and cortex cerebri are intact. The leptomeninges are thin and delicate. The cerebral hemispheres are symmetrical. The structures at the base of the brain, including cranial nerves and blood vessels, are intact and free of abnormality. Sections through the cerebral hemispheres reveal no lesions within the cortex, subcortical white matter, or deep parenchyma of either hemisphere. The basal ganglia,

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thalami, and Ammon's horn are unremarkable. The cerebral ventricles are normal caliber. Sections through the brain stem and cerebellum are unremarkable.

The extensive postmortem thermal fracturing and amputations with fourth degree (full skin thickness to bone and internal organs), is well documented in the autopsy report. These findings limit the ability to opine on certain autopsy findings.

The subject's already deceased body sustained significant postmortem artifact: "Charred.... -- most of the flesh was gone. You can see the intestines. You can see the brain. The heat had been intense. There had been fractures of a number of bones. All the ribs was broken. The skull had some cracks and fractures in it. The left hand was missing. Both feet were missing.... [T]his [extensive fracturing of bones] was from fire because the body was so severely charred. Totally black from top to bottom.... I don't think [fractures were caused by anything but the fire]. Even though the body was badly charred on the outside, from the inside, we would see evidence of bleeding had there been any bleeding there. I think it [extensive fracturing, including the ribs] was from the heat."

Although not explicit, the autopsy appears to indicate the absence of smoke/soot Inhalation associated with a fire:

"The upper airway is clear of debris and foreign material; the mucosal surfaces are smooth, yellow-tan and unremarkable."

This likely indicates that the subject was dead prior to the conflagration, although it may be that the fire lacked significant such product to cause such deposits in a living subject during the fire while the subject was alive.

At a pretrial hearing, the State acknowledged the lack of clarity in rendering opinions regarding pre-mortem versus post-mortem findings in cases such as this:

"...after talking with pathologist whether the cause of death was a blow to the head or it was the actual burning of the body. The problem being that when a body is burned, the skull bursts and so there is some question."

Despite the autopsy conclusion of a single blunt force trauma to the head:

"In light of the historical information, gross, microscopic and toxicological autopsy findings, it is the opinion of the prosecutors that the decedent, [REDACTED] died as a result of blunt force trauma to the head."

The state was uncertain about the actual cause of death. Per the prosecutor in the case:

"...it's not 100 percent clear how the death occurred. The autopsy says there was a blow to the head, but the body when it was found was in very bad shape and there is a question even with the pathologist about the cause of death."

This uncertainty expressed by the State was to the extent that the State altered the indictment to allow for additional, non-stated, non-autopsy documented theoretical scenarios:

"... when the State amends the murder indictment, we intend to include alternative possibilities as to the actual cause of death."

This in direct contrast to the medically determined cause of death:

"Blunt force trauma to head"

with an associated survival interval of:

"seconds-minutes"

As well as the final autopsy diagnoses:

"Blunt force trauma to the head with right parietal skull fracture, epidural and subdural hemorrhage."

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HARTFORD COUNTY, S.C.

The State further disparaged the autopsy report, casting doubt on the level of confidence therein:

"...the autopsy report basically has some conjecture."

Guesswork is an anathema to conclusions professional medicolegal death investigation. Speculation has no place in such matters, particularly when a subject's life is on the line or one is attempting to explain a cause of violent death. In an instance where such little faith is expressed in an autopsy result, additional information should be sought -- such as review by a qualified medical professional in the form of a "second opinion."

- The autopsy describes subdural blood, an expected finding with premortem formation but also describes epidural blood, a likely thermal artifact. The meager autopsy description is such that these findings may be merged and the epidural blood has migrated to a subdural location.

The autopsy documented both epidural and subdural blood collections:

"In the skull, in the right-hand side under the parietal bone.... There was a fracture here that was epidermal hemorrhage, which is hemorrhage on top of the heavy lining of the surface of the brain. And there was subdural hemorrhage as well so there was a big blood clot in the ear."

Although epidural and subdural bleeds are described, said description is meager and lack any further documentation.

Epidural blood is a well-known thermal artifact; in such instances, the bleed is readily recognized and classically described as "dark brown" or "chocolate brown." Any color descriptors are absent in the autopsy description. Subdural blood is not generally associated with thermal artifact but may be, under certain circumstances; with disruption of the dura matter which may happen associated with thermal injury, epidural blood could migrate and/or otherwise appear to have collected in a subdural location and may be mischaracterized.

With thermal burns, the calvarium is expected to have the boiling and parboiled intracranial contents under pressure until such time as the skull forcefully explodes with associated postmortem thermal skull fractures.

- The autopsy description of the epidural/subdural blood and brain has some inexplicable seeming contradictions and limits the objective evaluation of the findings to determine the true nature of the head injury.

Microscopic examination of the tissues documented:

"Sections of organs show heat artifact consistent with charring. The brain demonstrates hemorrhage with the presence of inflammatory cells consistent with premortem injury"

As described above, the presence of inflammatory cells with the brain indicates an injury with survival for a significant period of time prior to death in order to allow the body to formulate such a "vital response." The provided description is meager and provides insufficient detail as to the nature of the inflammatory infiltrate (composition, location, and presence/absence of associated findings). Specifically, the gross description fails to note "any" brain injury, which is in direct contradiction to the microscopic description of blood with inflammation. With a significant premortem

brain injury, the subject would be expected to have "coup" (blow) injury subjacent to an impact site. Conversely, with a fall, a "contre coup" (opposite the blow) injury may form provided sufficient survival time to develop same. Based solely on the autopsy description provided, these questions cannot be addressed with any sort of definitive answer. Additional materials, in the form of examination of actual remaining tissues (either grossly with the naked eye and/or microscopically with retained histology slides). In addition, these issues might be satisfactorily addressed with examination of sufficient routine and expected photodocumentation of the external and internal detailed examination of the brain (and other) tissues. To date, none of the aforementioned documentation has been provided for an independent assessment.

- **More detailed examination of the cranial and central nervous system tissues (by means of direct tissue examination if such samples remain and/or are sufficiently photodocumented to allow independent assessment would clearly assist in ascertaining the nature of the head wounds as artifact and/or premortem.**
For example, the head has described associated epidural and subdural blood. The presence of subdural blood may suggest an antemortem injury, however, this may be present in continuity with the described epidural blood and thus could represent a continuation of the known artifactual epidural blood. Neither of these bleeds is quantified or described in such a way as to permit an independent observer reading the report to reach any meaningful conclusion regarding the definite source and nature of the blood. The bleeds are described in aggregate with specific reference to exposure of the brain, indicating disruption of the dura matter which should be the separating point between epidural (potential artifactual postmortem) and subdural (potential premortem) collections.
- **Significant open external wounds (such as lacerations), especially to the highly vascular head area, would be expected to have copious associated blood in a living subject. Postmortem oozing can occur with such injuries after death.**
Significant inflicted premortem blunt force injury to the head resulting in death usually has open skin wounds. Here the finding of such injury is not possible due to the destruction of the scalp. Regardless, with such a wound causing death, copious blood would be expected at the scene of the event as well as any resting location(s) of the subject's body.
Even small wounds to the area of the head (for example the mouth) may bleed copiously in a living subject.
An existing transcutaneous defect extending to a fractured subjacent skull would be expected to provide direct access from the external to internal areas and thus allow free thermal access (and associated damage) to subjacent tissues, thus the described right skull defect in such instance would be expected to be associated with charring and burning, extending to the brain surface. These characteristics were not described here, suggesting such a pre-fire defect was absent, making a lethal head wound less likely.

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- The autopsy report provides no indication that any scene materials were reviewed and/or evaluated in conjunction with the autopsy.

Integration of the scene findings with the autopsy findings is critical to good forensic Pathology practice. All death cases begin at the scene. In order to opine about a violent cause of death, all available scene information should be reviewed and noted by the examining Forensic Pathologist.

- The scene and sub-locations lacked prominent identified blood, both in general and associated with any specific weapon. With an open, eventually lethal head wound (as from a blow), blood evidence would be expected with a living subject.

In a case with an open head wound, a deceased subject would be expected to actively bleed (if living) or ooze (postmortem) from the physical location of an injury to the final resting point of the deceased body. Such rate may differ but unless steps were taken to obfuscate same, a blood trail would be expected.

At the scene of a violent struggle with open head wounds, blood transfer and spatter would be expected – even if the subject were rendered incapacitated and immobile, blood evidence would be expected.

- The autopsy found no external injury, no damage to the neck structures, no aspirated blood, and no swallowed blood. In a living subject with skull fracture and subdural blood, it is common for the subject to breathe bloody fluid into the airways resulting in tracheobronchial and pulmonary tissue centric blood.

With blood in the subdural space, depending on location and associated damage the subject may inhale blood which was not described at autopsy:

"The upper airway is clear of debris and foreign material; the mucosal surfaces are smooth, yellow-tan and unremarkable."

The absence of neck blood and identified conjunctival and mucosal petechial bleeds argues against strangulation, as might be used to incapacitate or hinder a subject from self-extricating from a physical engagement (i.e., "grabbing by the throat").

- The described fracture could have resulted from a fall or from a volitional head impact, as the State's expert opined at trial.

It would not take significant force to fracture the subject's skull. As the State's expert opined at trial, the decedent had:

"... a small, thin skull, and it wouldn't take a whole lot of force to fracture it"

"It's possible if she fell exactly wrong and hit her head very hard, then it could have fractured her skull."

A death associated with a fall often has associated subdural blood and may have little else in terms of injury – especially following a subsequent severe fire with the scalp obliterated by thermal artifact. The head clearly has postmortem facial injury, as opined by the State's Expert:

"The skull had some cracks and fractures in it... [T]his [extensive fracturing of bones] was from fire because the body was so severely charred. I think it was from the heat."

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The State's expert was properly vague in attempting to suggest a possible impacting surface, since the thermally damaged body retained little useful information in regards details of this surface:

"...It's got to be something big enough to give a fracture and as big around as a lemon.... This is best guess, but my thought is this would have to be something about six inches wide by six or more inches long. It would have to be something there. Now again, without the scalp, I can't see the scalp wound. So I can't get a good idea of the shape of this, so I'm being pretty imprecise here. But there is just a lot I couldn't see.... it could be three by six, something in that range, something several inches by more than several inches."

- The clothing of S2 had limited blood evidence recovered. Testing for salivary amylase may have been helpful in determining if some or all of this blood originated from S1's mouth.

This testing might still be of value if the evidence is still available.

- Routinely, true subdural blood would ideally be collected and analyzed for postmortem toxicology, since this sample would provide the best sample for addressing the various toxicology results at the time when the blood formed.

This testing might still be of value if the evidence is still available.

The foregoing specifically addresses received materials. My opinions may be further supplemented by testimony and/or discovery not yet completed in this matter, including but not limited to direct examination of material(s) from the case including but not necessarily limited to toxicology studies, additional medical records of the subjects, case photographs and/or video, materials requested, testimony, and relevant literature.

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B. Facts or data considered in forming the above opinions:

In addition to my background, training, education, and experience, the above opinions are based upon facts and data contained within the following materials received for review in this case:

1. Motion from 1/12/2017
2. Pathologist pretrial statement
3. File
 - a. Table of contents
 - b. Case background
 - 1) Issue of Interest (Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals)
 - 2) Motion from 2015 (Repressed Memories)
 - 3) Memorandum (2244)
 - 4) Reply (2244)
4. Scene Findings
 - a. Scene Notes – Al Stuckey
 - b. Trial Testimony – Al Stuckey (PP138-147)
 - c. Scene Notes – Bobby Elvington
 - d. Trial Testimony – Bobby Elvington (PP125-137)
 - e. Trial Testimony – Stanton Wright (PP211, LL5-14)
5. Physical and Forensic Findings
 - a. Trial Testimony – Det. Dallas Gurley (P36, L18 to P37, L6; P474 LL9-21; P638, LL7-13)
 - b. SLED Laboratory Evidence Inventory Sheet
 - c. SLED Forensic Services Laboratory Report (Cecil Bradstreet)
 - d. Trial Testimony – Cecil Bradstreet (PP148-158)
 - e. SLED Forensic Services Laboratory Report (Manuel J. Ortuno)
 - f. Trial Testimony – Manuel J. Ortuno (PP172-183)
 - g. Trial Testimony – S2 (P530, L19 to P531, L3 & P553, L19 to P554, L3)
6. Police and Lay Witness Observations of Weldon Stewart (on day of incident)
 - a. Incident Report – Sammy Crosland
 - b. Pretrial Interview Brief – Sammy Crosland
 - c. Trial Testimony – Sammy Crosland (PP355-9)
 - d. Trial Testimony – Alvin Worsley (P350, LL10-23)
 - e. Trial Testimony – Stanton Wright (P210, L8 to P211, L4)
 - f. Trial Testimony – Robert Moore (P250, L17 to P251, L7)
7. Mental Health History
 - a. Trial Testimony – Tony Allen (P122, L6 to P123, L1)
 - b. Letter written by S1 stating suicidal ideation
 - c. Forensic Handwriting Analyst Report – James A. Green
 - d. Request for mental health records of S1
 - e. Denial of request for mental health records of S1
8. Social History
 - a. Trial Testimony – Tony Allen (P124, LL8-14)
 - b. Trial Testimony – Anthony Allen (P365, LL17-24)
 - c. Trial Testimony – Stanton Wright (P204, L2 to P205, L7)
 - d. Trial Testimony – Anastasia Love (P592, L23 to P594, L22)
 - e. Trial Testimony – Deneka Harrington (P602, L24 to P605, L8)
9. Original Autopsy Findings

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- a. Autopsy Report (MUSC #FA00-686)
- b. Trial Testimony – Dr. Russell Harley (PP159-171)

10. Photos

a. SLED

(#03640001-03640022, 000013690001-000003690023, & 000003710001-000003710019)

Living Room (computer desk)	Living Room view of fireplace	leaf w/ blood
Living Room looking into dining room	Living Room view of dining room	few leaves w/ blood
Kitchen	Living Room view of hallway/dining room	few leaves w/ blood
Front r	Parents Room	leaves w/ blood & stick
Entry Way (one room to another)	Parents Room	Path
Dining Room	Parents Room	Path leaves
Melanie's Bedroom	Living Room	Front of house, street, police cars
Melanie's Bedroom	Parents Room view of bathroom	Street
Entry way to Melanie's bedroom	Parents Room	Front of house w/view of left side of house
Kitchen	Hallway looking into bathroom	Front of house w/view of right side of house
Hall Closet	Bathroom	Front car port
Hallway	Bathroom	Front of house
Room with shoe rack on door	Bathroom view to bedroom	Back of house w/ ball court, back deck
Melanie's Bedroom	Hallway	Back of house
Weldon's Bedroom (bed)	Hallway Closet	Side of House
Weldon's Bedroom (glass on dresser)	Laundry Room (dark view of Weldon's room & jacket	Side of House
Weldon's Bedroom (jacket)	Bathroom	Back scene of burning
Hallway looking into Weldon's Room	Bathroom trash can	Back shed
Doorway Frame (possible blood)	Laundry Room (iron, vacuum, etc.) sliding glass door	Back pole scene of burning
Weldon's Bedroom (picture on wall	Washing Machine	Back distant scene of burning
Weldon's Bedroom (bed looking to closet	Laundry Room	Scene of burning
Weldon's Room Bed stick	Green Shower Curtain	Shed
Path (cigarettes)	Close Up leaves, blood, cigarettes	Shed
Path (a little further back pic)	Path, leaves, cigarettes	Clearing shed
Side of House	Parents Room dresser	Clearing Path
Path Close Up Cigarettes	Parents Room	Clearing looking towards house
Living Room to Hallway	Close Up Leave w/ blood	Clearing looking towards scene of burning
Outside Front of House	zoomed in leaf w/ blood	Clearing looking towards house
Side of house	zoomed in leaf w/ blood	
Living Room view of front door		

- b. Scene Photos (#1-16)
- c. Scene House (#3-4)
- d. Scene Yard (#1-3)
- e. Autopsy (requested)

11. Psychologist's report




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WELDON STEWART, JR. (00295095)

TRENTON

Case Worker: BRIAN null DOWNARD
 Started: February 22, 2024 03:38 PM
 Finished: February 22, 2024 03:38 PM



Scoring Legend

Minimum	Medium	Close
-5 - 4 	5 - 9 	10 - 37 

Assessment Calculated Scoring

February 22, 2024 03:38 PM

BRIAN null DOWNARD

Classification	Points Possible	Points Scored	Custody
AUTO CALCULATED	37	1	 MINIMUM
AUTO RECOMMENDED	AGREE		 MINIMUM

NON-DISCRETIONARY MINIMUM RESTRICTIONS

Failed	Restriction	Failed	Restriction
	MORE THAN 8 YEARS TO MAXOUT		CONVICTED SEX OFFENSE
	CATEGORY 4-5 OPEN ARREST		CATEGORY 4-5 FELONY DETAINER
	CATEGORY 4-5 HOLD OR WANTED DETAINER		OUT OF STATE/FEDERAL DETAINER (WANTED/HOLD/NOTIFY)
	ICE DETAINER		NOT U.S. CITIZEN
	CLASS 1 ESCAPE		CLASS 2 ESCAPE WITHIN PAST 7 YEARS
	VALIDATED GANG MEMBER		CURRENT VIOLENT WITH PRIOR VIOLENT CONVICTION

NON-DISCRETIONARY MEDIUM RESTRICTIONS

Failed	Restriction	Failed	Restriction
	LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE AND SERVED LESS THAN 7 YEARS		LIFE WITH PAROLE AND SERVED LESS THAN 7 YEARS
	DEATH ROW		

SELECT ONE ANSWER FROM EACH ITEM

<i>ITEM #1 CURRENT OFFENSE WITH HIGHEST CATEGORY</i>	Pts	Selected
1. CATEGORY 1 OR 2	1	
2. CATEGORY 3	2	
3. CATEGORY 4	4	X
4. CATEGORY 5	6	
<i>ITEM #2 PRIOR CONVICTIONS WITH HIGHEST CATEGORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS</i>	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. CATEGORY 1 OR 2	1	
3. CATEGORY 3	2	
4. CATEGORY 4	4	
5. CATEGORY 5	6	
<i>ITEM #3 ESCAPE HISTORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS</i>	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. CLASS 2	3	
3. CLASS 1	7	
<i>ITEM #4 PAST ASSAULTIVE DISCIPLINARY HISTORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS</i>	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. ANY ASSAULT - NO WEAPON	3	
3. ANY ASSAULT - WEAPON USED	7	
<i>ITEM #5 CURRENT AGE</i>	Pts	Selected
1. 25 YEARS AND YOUNGER	2	
2. 26 - 32 YEARS	1	
3. 33 - 50 YEARS	0	X
4. 51 YEARS AND OLDER	-1	
<i>ITEM #6 VALIDATED/SUSPECTED GANG MEMBERSHIP</i>	Pts	Selected
1. VALIDATED/DESIGNATED GANG MEMBER	2	
2. SUSPECTED GANG MEMBER	1	
3. NONE OF THE ABOVE	0	X
<i>ITEM #7 NUMBER OF MAJOR DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS</i>	Pts	Selected
1. NONE PAST 24 MONTHS	-2	X
2. NONE PAST 12 MONTHS	-1	
3. 1 - 3 PAST 12 MONTHS	1	
4. 4 - 5 PAST 12 MONTHS	3	
5. 6+ PAST 12 MONTHS	5	

WELDON STEWART, JR. (00295095)

TRENTON

<i>ITEM #8 WORK/PROGRAM PARTICIPATION - IN PAST 12 MONTHS</i>	<i>Pts</i>	<i>Selected</i>
<i>1. REFUSING TO WORK OR PROGRAM</i>	<i>2</i>	
<i>2. RECEIVED EARNED WORK <u><i></i></u>OR<u></i></u></u></i> PROGRAM CREDITS PAST 12 MONTHS	<i>-1</i>	<i>X</i>
<i>3. RECEIVED EARNED WORK <u><i></i></u>AND<u></i></u></u></i> PROGRAM CREDITS	<i>-3</i>	
<i>4. NOT REQUIRED</i>	<i>0</i>	

WELDON STEWART, JR. (00295095)

TRENTON

Case Worker: ██████████ BURNETT

Started: February 18, 2025 12:54 PM

Finished: February 18, 2025 12:55 PM

Scoring Legend

Minimum	Medium	Close
-5 - 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	6 - 9 <input type="checkbox"/>	10 - 37 <input type="checkbox"/>

Assessment Calculated Scoring February 18, 2025 12:55 PM
BURNETT

Classification	Points Possible	Points Scored	Custody
AUTO CALCULATED	37	4	<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMUM
AUTO RECOMMENDED	AGREE		<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMUM

NON-DISCRETIONARY MINIMUM RESTRICTIONS

Failed	Restriction	Failed	Restriction
	MORE THAN 8 YEARS TO MAX OUT		CONVICTED SEX OFFENSE
	CATEGORY 4-5 OPEN ARREST		CATEGORY 4-5 FELONY DETAINER
	CATEGORY 4-5 HOLD OR WANTED DETAINER		OUT OF STATE/FEDERAL DETAINER (WANTED/HOLD/NOTIFY)
	ICE DETAINER		NOT U.S. CITIZEN
	CLASS 1 ESCAPE		CLASS 2 ESCAPE WITHIN PAST 7 YEARS
	VALIDATED GANG MEMBER		CURRENT VIOLENT WITH PRIOR VIOLENT CONVICTION
	LEVEL 1 OR 2 MAJOR DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS (WITHIN PAST 6 MONTHS)		

NON-DISCRETIONARY LOW RESTRICTIONS

Failed	Restriction	Failed	Restriction
	CONVICTED SEX OFFENSE		LEVEL 1 OR 2 MAJOR DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS (WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS)

NON-DISCRETIONARY MEDIUM RESTRICTIONS

Failed	Restriction	Failed	Restriction
	LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE AND SERVED LESS THAN 7 YEARS DEATH ROW		LIFE WITH PAROLE AND SERVED LESS THAN 7 YEARS

Institutional Custody Assignment February 18, 2025 12:56 PM
ANTOINETTE D BURNETT

Classification	Custody Action	Custody
RECOMMENDED	AGREE	<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMUM

Notes: ANNUAL REVIEW: PER ICC MI CUSTODY; CONTACT VERIFIED; TRANSFER-NOT ELIGIBLE.

Central Class Approved Custody February 20, 2025 12:29 PM
ALEXANDRIA S SIFFORD

Classification	Custody Action	Custody
STATE APPROVED	AGREE	<input type="checkbox"/> MINIMUM

Notes: CC: CONCUR MI/MEETS CRITERIA

SELECT ONE ANSWER FROM EACH ITEM

ITEM #1 CURRENT OFFENSE WITH HIGHEST CATEGORY	Pts	Selected
1. CATEGORY 1 OR 2	1	
2. CATEGORY 3	2	
3. CATEGORY 4	4	X
4. CATEGORY 5	6	
ITEM #2 PRIOR CONVICTIONS WITH HIGHEST CATEGORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. CATEGORY 1 OR 2	1	
3. CATEGORY 3	2	
4. CATEGORY 4	4	
5. CATEGORY 5	6	
ITEM #3 ESCAPE HISTORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. CLASS 2	3	
3. CLASS 1	7	
ITEM #4 PAST ASSAULTIVE DISCIPLINARY HISTORY - IN PAST 7 YEARS	Pts	Selected
1. NONE	0	X
2. ANY ASSAULT - NO WEAPON	3	
3. ANY ASSAULT - WEAPON USED	7	
ITEM #5 CURRENT AGE	Pts	Selected
1. 25 YEARS AND YOUNGER	2	
2. 26 - 32 YEARS	1	
3. 33 - 50 YEARS	0	X
4. 51 YEARS AND OLDER	-1	
ITEM #6 VALIDATED/SUSPECTED GANG MEMBERSHIP	Pts	Selected
1. VALIDATED/DESIGNATED GANG MEMBER	2	
2. SUSPECTED GANG MEMBER	1	
3. NONE OF THE ABOVE	0	X
ITEM #7 NUMBER OF MAJOR DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS	Pts	Selected
1. NONE PAST 24 MONTHS	-2	
2. NONE PAST 12 MONTHS	-1	
3. 1 - 3 PAST 12 MONTHS	1	X
4. 4 - 5 PAST 12 MONTHS	3	
5. 6+ PAST 12 MONTHS	5	

WELDON STEWART, JR. (00295095)

TRENTON

ITEM #8 WORK/PROGRAM PARTICIPATION - IN PAST 12 MONTHS	Pts	Selected
1. EARNED WORK <u><i></i>OR</i></u> PROGRAM CREDITS FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS</u>	-1	X
1. REFUSING TO WORK OR PROGRAM	2	
2. EARNED WORK <u><i></i>AND</i></u> PROGRAM CREDITS FOR AT LEAST 6+ MONTHS WITHIN PAST 12 MONTHS</u>	-3	
2. RECEIVED EARNED WORK <u><i></i>OR</i></u> PROGRAM CREDITS PAST 12 MONTHS</u>	-1	
3. EARNED WORK CREDITS FOR AT LEAST 6 MONTHS <u><i></i>AND</i></u> PROGRAM CREDITS FOR 3-6 MONTHS WITHIN THE PAST 12 MONTHS</u>	-2	
3. RECEIVED EARNED WORK <u><i></i>AND</i></u> PROGRAM CREDITS</u>	-3	
4. NOT REQUIRED	0	

04/15/2025

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

My name is Weldon W. Stewart Jr., and I am writing you on my own behalf humbly asking you grant me bail pending my appeal.

I want to start by asking the Justices to ponder on one simple question: What if I'm really innocent?

While you ponder on this question, let me bring you into the reality of my world.

It's ironic that I have never in my life put my hands on a female but I am wrongfully convicted of killing a female. One of my earliest experiences being in the prison general population is when I was stabbed multiple times by another inmate whose little sister had just been murdered, so he lashed out on the first person he saw who was convicted of killing a female. That person happened to be me.

Though I was deeply sorry for his loss, and I could even understand why he attacked me based on my charges, my need for survival in this harsh prison environment dictated that I was forced to reciprocate with an act of violence against him. Over the ensuing years of my incarceration, I was repeatedly placed in situations where I had to violently repel vicious physical attacks from other inmates who were notified that some tragedy had occurred involving their female loved ones.

Eventually, my reputation for violence and aggression grew to the extent that people stopped trying to take their personal problems out on me. Though I was physically safe, the things I had to do to survive in prison had taken a tremendous toll on my humanity. My morals and values had been stripped away and had been replaced with an animalistic instinct to survive by any means.

This all changed when I met my wife.

One of the first things she said to me when she found out I was in prison was that God told her to help me because I am a good person. I internally scoffed at her because after living in hell for fourteen years, I no longer believed God existed. Plus, I was far from a good person. And the countless violent deaths I witnessed throughout my incarceration had made me lose all hope that I would ever leave prison alive.

My wife encouraged me to start doing positive things with my time in prison. So I started participating in programs and I was eventually transferred to Allendale Institution, a prison completely devoted to character programs. While at Allendale, I joined Toastmasters

International, received computer training, and lived with and trained my dog, Ranger, who my wife later adopted. Most importantly, I began to heal on the inside as I opened up and talked about my inner pain, including my childhood trauma.

It's ironic that my saving grace is starting a cat program, because I used to hate cats. However, working with the cats at Trenton Institution has given me a sense of purpose. I know how it feels to struggle with mental health, but I also know how therapeutic the presence of a loyal furry companion can be to a person with mental health challenges. When I return to society, I want to expand the mission of my cat program to rescuing cats and dogs and training them as support animals for people with mental disabilities. I have found my purpose in life.

Since the beginning of my incarceration, my mother told me God was not going to release me from prison until I was ready to be the person He was calling me to be. I have been blessed with a good wife, strong family and community support, and a clarity of purpose. It's been a long, hard journey, but I am finally ready to be released from prison. That's because I have grown into the man God revealed to my wife I would become.

In conclusion, I'm deeply sorry for everything I did wrong in this situation. But the one thing I didn't do wrong is kill anyone. I'm not a murderer. I believe the sworn affidavit I have provided to the Court from the person who conducted the autopsy in this case warrants the Court giving serious consideration to my claim of innocence.

With that said, I again ask: What if I'm really innocent?

After everything I've suffered, nothing can be done to make things right. However, I'm praying that you, the Justices of the Supreme Court, will take the first step towards administering justice in this case by giving me a fair chance to prove my innocence and granting me bail pending the resolution of my appeal.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Weldon W. Stewart, Jr.
Trenton Correctional Institution
84 Greenhouse Rd
Trenton, SC 29847

04/15/2025

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

I am writing on behalf of my husband, Weldon W. Stewart, Jr., as a character reference letter for his petition for bail. I have known Weldon for eleven years and we have been married for over five years. In this time, I have come to truly admire and respect him. Weldon is the strongest and most extraordinary man I have ever known. He is a highly intelligent, natural born leader who possesses integrity, honor and a fierce drive and determination to continually face any adversities that come his way.

My life was simple before I met Weldon. My first marriage failed, and both my parents had died from cancer. So, I devoted myself to my career, my daughter, and my grandchildren.

I started working for the FBI when I was nineteen years old. I was pregnant with my daughter, and I wanted to be able to provide her with a stable life, and to set a positive example for her. Before I met Weldon, my service record with the Bureau was exemplary. I had only received one oral reprimand in twenty-four years of service.

I was financially secure and was doing a job I was proud of because I was serving my country. I was a devoted mother and grandmother. I was a woman with a strong faith in God. Basically, my life was a shining example for my daughter of stability and respectability.

When I met Weldon, the first thing he did was lie to me. He told me his name was Ben and that he was a real estate developer from California. A couple of weeks later he came clean and told me who he really was. I was livid. When he told me about his charges, I was stunned speechless, and not in a good way. I politely and professionally thanked him for his honesty. But I was done with him.

It was my intention to never speak to Weldon again, but over the next few weeks I couldn't get him out of my mind. I kept having dreams where people were telling me to help him because he was a good person. I didn't understand what all this meant, so I fasted and prayed to God for guidance. I didn't like the answer I received.

I couldn't understand why God was giving me so many signs of confirmation that a man who was convicted of such a heinous crime was a good person. I felt like Ananias when Jesus told him to wash the scales from Saul's eyes. I reluctantly reached out to Weldon and told him God told me to help him because he was a good person. His only response was a sarcastic chuckle. His indifference was discouraging, but I stepped out on faith and began my investigation into his case.

A few months later, I was informed that I was under investigation from the Bureau due to my association with Weldon. My supervisor advised me that she mediated a reduction in my sanctions to an oral reprimand, in deference to my longstanding and dedicated service to the Bureau, but I had to immediately cease all communication with Weldon. By this time, I had discovered enough credible evidence to make me seriously question Weldon's guilt. It was enough that I couldn't abandon him with a clear conscience. I respectfully declined my supervisor's offer. That decision ended my career with the FBI.

Looking back, I can confidentially state I made the right decision because I have obtained a mountain of credible evidence which independently corroborates Weldon's claims of innocence. I didn't accept anything Weldon told me on face value. I conducted my own thorough investigation with integrity, professionalism, and respect for the law. In the course of my investigation, I consulted with reputable forensic experts in various fields and with both state and federal attorneys.

It can be said that I'm biased because he is my husband. However, the forensic crime scene investigator who noted there was no evidence of violence on the scene is not married to Weldon. The same is true of the independent forensic pathologist who submitted a comprehensive report outlining all the evidence in this case that clearly refutes a conclusion of homicide. No personal relationship exists between my husband and the pathologist who conducted the autopsy in this case for the prosecution. Yet, this pathologist signed a sworn affidavit admitting he could have been wrong about the death being a homicide and confirming it's possible there was a suicide.

It's very telling that trained professionals, even those who worked directly with the prosecution in this case, see the exact same thing that I see when I look at the credible evidence. This evidence raises serious questions as to whether an innocent man has been sitting in prison his entire adult life for a crime that never happened. Even if you believe that I am biased and that Weldon has a self-serving interest in falsely claiming his innocence, the evidence doesn't lie.

I ask you, the Justices of the Supreme Court, to consider how extremely unlikely it is that a person could produce such overwhelming corroboration for his claim of innocence, unless he is actually innocent.

I ask you to also consider how unfair it is to a wife to have to visit her innocent husband in prison, week after week. Weldon is never there to hold me when I've had a bad day, or to take care of things for me when I'm not feeling well. His incarceration also poses a huge financial burden on me, as paying for collect phone calls, canteen, and instant messages is very expensive. I spend between \$1,000 to \$1,500 a month on these expenses, it fluctuates depending on whether we are working on a legal document that month or not.

I support my husband and encourage him to do positive things. I'm very proud of him and the tremendous growth I have seen in him. Currently, Weldon participates in the LOOP program and provides motivational speeches to the new orientation classes at Trenton.

The program that he is most passionate about is the cat program that he started at Trenton Institution to rescue stray cats at the prison. Before Weldon arrived at Trenton, the cats at the

prison were an unhealthy bunch of strays who were rapidly multiplying. Weldon began training the cats and feeding them tuna from his canteen purchases. He then spearheaded and organized a network of community partners to assist him with the cats. A year later, Weldon and our community partners have spayed/neutered over 60 cats and facilitated the adoption of over 45 cats into loving homes. I am one of the volunteers that assists with this program. I'm an Administrator on the "Cats of Trenton Correctional" Facebook page (yes, the cats have their own Facebook page) and they also have a GoFundMe account, where we have raised over \$3,000 to assist with the cost of getting the cats spayed/neutered and medical attention.

I also speak to several people who have adopted cats from the prison that were trained and cared for by Weldon. They expressed the joy and companionship their fur babies bring into their lives. Weldon is that rare person who while in prison makes positive contributions to society. He is passionate about continuing his animal advocacy mission particularly training animals to be therapeutic companions for people with mental health challenges, if he is granted bail. I'm looking forward to being right there with him and assisting with making his dream a reality.

I am a law-abiding citizen with no criminal history and I'm a hard worker. I currently work from home and can personally assure the Court that if Weldon is granted bail, I will be right there with him to ensure he complies with all the conditions of bail. Weldon will be in a stable home environment in a quiet, country neighborhood. He will also have all the resources he needs readily available for him to be able to effectively represent himself, because I have a complete home office.

In conclusion, this is a very tragic situation and everyone on both sides has suffered in their own way. Regardless of the outcome there will be no winners. However, the truth will be revealed through credible evidence, and everyone will be able to finally have closure.

I sincerely pray that the Honorable Justices of this Court will find it in your hearts to grant my husband his request for bail.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,

Lori Stewart


04/11/2025

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my son, Weldon W. Stewart, Jr., as a character reference letter for his petition for bail.

My husband and I have three children. We raised our children in a strong Christian household and taught them to have good manners, to be kind to others and treat adults with respect. We took them to church every Wednesday night for bible study and every Sunday morning for the church service.

Weldon, Jr is our oldest child. He was such a happy and caring child. He was also advanced academically. He knew how to read at 3 years old, he was in gifted and talented classes at school, and he was in the 99th percentile in the nation for math. He has always been extremely close to our middle child, Melanie, who is two years younger than Weldon. Melanie has always looked up to her big brother. Weldon had Melanie reading by the time she was 3 years old, as well, she wanted to do everything her big brother did. Weldon also spent a lot of time with our youngest son, Daron, who is seven years younger than Weldon. Weldon was always encouraging Daron and other younger children and set a good example for them.

Weldon loved being outside and was always willing to lend a hand to anyone that needed one. He would frequently go out to our garden with his father and would ask if he could dig up something from the garden to give to someone. He has always had such a caring and giving spirit. He was very respectful of his elders and loved to spend time with his babysitter, Ms. Littles. She shared a lot of wisdom with Weldon.

When Weldon was 10 years old, he went on a summer camp bus trip to Lake Wallace, to go swimming. On this trip, a group of older neighborhood boys tried to drown him. They were picking on Weldon because he excelled academically, and they were jealous. This near drowning experience traumatized Weldon and it changed him. His grades started dropping, he wasn't completing his schoolwork or homework, and he became the class clown because he wanted to fit in, so the bullies wouldn't bother him anymore.

He started hanging with the wrong crowd and getting in trouble. We eventually sent him to a therapeutic school, which is where the counselor informed us that during a group session with the counselor and his peers Weldon remembered the near drowning experience and that he had repressed the memory. When he came back home, we still had challenges with him concerning school and getting him to graduate.

Weldon enlisted in the Army in November 2000 and was scheduled to go in January 2001, we were very proud of him and had high hopes for his future. Unfortunately, this tragic event happened in December 2000, and he never made it to the Army.

My son has been incarcerated for over 24 years. My husband and I will never forget that awful day in December. We both got up that morning and went to work like any other normal day and then the world as we knew it suddenly changed for our lives and the lives of our family forever. It was like the sun was shining and there wasn't a cloud in the sky, then suddenly, a tornado came out of nowhere and brought pain, devastation and destruction to each and every person touched by this tragedy.

There was a point in time shortly after my son was incarcerated that I felt like I could not go on. For months, all I could do was walk around my house praying, quoting scriptures and crying. People in our community shunned us. One lady at the church asked me, "how can you have given birth to such a monster?" My husband was a boy scout leader and one of the boys from his troop came over to speak to us at a restaurant and the boy's parents quickly pulled the boy back and told him to "stay away from those people". My youngest son, Daron, was in Burger King placing a food order and came back out to the car shaking and crying because a lady was yelling at him and taunting him saying cruel things to him about his brother. Our daughter, Melanie, was also ridiculed and ostracized, so much so that she went away to school and left the state. It was just too much for her.

Weldon also had a baby girl, Alexis. She was only five months old when he was arrested. Because our son was not able to take care of his daughter, my husband and I stepped up and helped take care of Alexis. We basically raised her; she is more like our daughter than granddaughter.

My son wasn't the type of person to harm a female. It has never been reported to me by his teachers, his friends or peers that my son ever mistreated a female. His friends and peers would always say that if a young lady put her hands on Weldon, he would talk to the young lady and try to calm her down, but he would never be aggressive or try to hit the young lady back. He wasn't raised like that and didn't believe in that. He always spoke against a man mistreating a female.

When Weldon was waiting to go to trial, my husband and I would go visit him frequently and it was obvious to both of us that he was being mistreated. He had bruises, black eyes, scars and lost a lot of weight. It broke my heart seeing him like that. I felt like I was on pins and needles and would literally jump every time the phone would ring because I didn't know if I was getting "that" phone call informing me something terrible had happened to my son.

As a mother, this experience made me feel like my heart was literally shattering into tiny pieces. The magnitude of the hurt and pain I felt for my son is indescribable and hurt me to the utter core of my being. It felt like I was crying tears from my heart. Only a mother who has watched her first-born son go through something like this could possibly understand.

I started having severe anxiety attacks and it caused detrimental effects on my health. So much so that one day, when I was driving and had my husband and other two children with me, I had

an anxiety attack and almost had a terrible accident. I swerved off the road and avoided a collision, just in the nick of time. When I stopped the car, I slumped over in the seat, I was so distraught, and the chest pain was so intense that I felt like I was going to die. I heard my husband's voice calling me from a distance and telling me not to leave, that he and my other two children needed me. It was then that I knew I had to pull myself together and while I was going to continue to be there for my son, I couldn't continue to be consumed with it, I had to also be there for my husband and other two children. I had been trying to intercede for my son and the Lord showed me a picture of Weldon with the keys in his chest and told me that Weldon has everything he needs within him in this situation and that God is going to right the wrong.

Alcoholics on the streets were treating us better than some of the people in the church. My father was a preacher, and I have been active in church my entire life. However, this situation made me think about leaving the church all together, but the Spirit of Lord said to me, if you walk away, you are not walking away from man, you are walking away from me because I head the church. I said, "Lord, I can't leave you". Shortly after that, a friend and Pastor that I was working with invited our family to come join his church. We did and we are still apart of this church family today. They have always been very supportive and encouraging throughout this entire situation.

We are very proud of our son and all of the accomplishments he has made. We admire how he has such a compassionate spirit and continues to help others in spite of all he has been through. He teaches classes and helps others get their GED's and is always sharing his food and hygiene products. He started a cat program at the prison he is in, and he plans to continue working with the program if he is granted bail.

Weldon is also a member of Toastmasters International. We have attended several of the Toastmaster events at the prison with his wife, Lori. While we enjoyed all the events, the one that made me the proudest was the event where Weldon was the main speaker, and his speech was called "Getting Off the Hamster Wheel" he shared about he had been on a hamster wheel of anger for years. His anger from being wrongfully convicted and in prison for so many years for something he didn't do. He shared that he finally got off the hamster wheel and was no longer a prisoner of circumstance and encouraged the audience to get off any hamster wheel that was holding them back. That we all have the power within us to change the course of our lives. His speech was so powerful that it moved everyone in the room, we all had tears in our eyes. I knew at that moment that my son no longer harbors any anger or resentment in this situation, and he was ready to come home.

We love Weldon's wife, Lori and are so thankful God brought her into our son's life. She is very encouraging and has given him hope. She has been working on his case for years and found a lot of evidence that strongly supports his innocence. We are waiting for the opportunity for the pathology experts to prove it.

My son is not a flight risk or a danger to society. He will be coming home to a loving, stable home with his wife and their animals, three out of the four of the animals were with him in prison, his dog, Ranger and the two cats, Lecrae and Fat Girl. We can't wait to visit him at his house, instead of a prison visitation room.

Words can't describe how much we miss our son. He has been incarcerated since he was 19 years old and has missed over 24 years of his life that he will never get back. He has missed his daughter's entire life. He has so much talent and potential and he is already making positive contributions to society with his cat program from prison, we can't wait to see what he will do once all of this is behind him.

We are praying for closure, so this nightmare that we have been living in for the last 24 years can be over, and we can all finally have peace and our son back home where he belongs.

We sincerely hope and pray that you will consider granting our son's petition for bail so he can work on his case to prove his innocence and finally come home.

Respectfully,

Virginia Tina Stewart

[REDACTED]
Bennettsville, SC 29512
[REDACTED]

04/11/2025

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my father, Weldon W. Stewart, Jr. as a character reference letter for his petition for bail.

My father has been incarcerated for 24 years, since I was 5 months old, so for my entire life I can only remember him being in prison. When I was growing up, I lived with my mom, but I was over at my grandparents' house (on my dad's side) all the time. They basically raised me. My dad missed ALL the milestones and special occasions of my life so far... ALL of my birthdays, Christmases, father-daughter dances at school, homecomings, proms, graduation, wedding day, birth of his two grandsons, NJ and Bryson. I got Guillain-Barre syndrome when I was pregnant with Bryson. Unfortunately, Bryson passed away at 4 days old and I was paralyzed and fighting for my life in the hospital ICU for months. My husband and I got divorced and my paternal grandparents (my dad's parents) took care of me during my four-year recovery. I don't know what I would have done if it wasn't for them. It has been a long four years, but I have participated in extensive physical therapy and am currently walking with a cane and getting stronger every day.

My life is improving; I met someone that has encouraged me on my journey and assists me with my recovery. We recently moved into our own place, and I am now pregnant with my daughter, Alaina. I hope and pray my dad will be able to be here for her birth in July and when the time comes for me to get married again be able to walk me down the aisle this time.

I'm proud of my dad. He has been doing positive things, such as helping people get their GED's, working with his cat program and staying focused on coming home to his family.

His wife, Lori, has a nice home for him to come home to with their pets. We visit her occasionally and I'm looking forward to visiting even more when my dad gets there.

I hope and pray that the court will release my dad on bail so he can work on his appeal and prove his innocence and finally be home, so me and his grandchildren can start making memories with him and sharing special occasions together.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,

Alexis Harper

Patrick, SC 29584

April 10, 2025

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

My name is Shaunte Gordon and I am writing to express my strong support in your decision to grant Weldon W Stewart Jr's upcoming bail request.

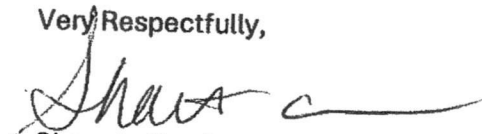
I've known Mr. Stewart for approximately fourteen years; he is married to my mother Lori Stewart who has been instrumental in assisting him with his case. Due to the nature of our relationship, I have been privy to a vast amount of knowledge that has been uncovered and strongly believe that Mr. Stewart has been wrongfully convicted.

Mr. Stewart has been instrumental in the Trenton Cat program by facilitating training, feeding and tending to the cats in hopes to rehabilitate them and get them fostered or adopted within the community. This role highlighted his dedication, compassion, and selflessness as he often used money from his canteen to provide food for cats in need. He displayed great leadership in organizing, coordinating and implementing the program that has been extremely successful.

Mr. Stewart is very caring and protective of his family members, he is always thinking of and checking on his family to ensure their safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and I am hopeful that a decision is made granting Mr. Stewart's bail.

Very Respectfully,



Shaunte Gordon

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC. 29201

Ref: Letter of Support for Weldon Stewart, Jr's petition for bail.

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

My name is Elya Alexander, address [REDACTED] Oakland Park, FL. 33309. My cell number is [REDACTED]. I am a family friend of Weldon Stewart, Jr's writing to express support for his petition for bail.

I have known Weldon Stewart for the past 7 years. Weldon became known to me through his wife, Lori Stewart while she and I worked for the same employer headquartered out of Austell, Georgia. She worked out of the Headquarter office and I out of the Miami Branch. Lori Stewart is a close friend who I have known for 8 years. I speak to Weldon and Lori regularly and on many occasions.

Since I have known Weldon, he has always been kindhearted, helpful and dedicated to helping others. I know he has participated in programs that teach and encourage fellow inmates. He has always been involved with training, feeding, and improving the quality of life for the cats and dogs around his environment. Weldon is intelligent, knowledgeable, and very helpful to others inside and outside his environment. Over the years I recognize his growth and maturity as the man he represents today. He offers suggestions, ideas, and support to his family and friends. He has always been able to offer actionable suggestions that helped me when I opened my business.

His wife, parents, and family are 100% supportive of him and stand by him. I do know that Weldon has been a good parent to his and Lori's children and grandchildren as much as possible in all aspects of their family life. Weldon's parents are religious and have good moral character in their community. Weldon has shown himself to be responsible, good character, and possess the tools to succeed in his community.

I strongly support the opportunity for Weldon Stewart to be granted bail.

Sincerely,

Elya Alexander

April 10, 2025

To: Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

From: Donna Camp
[REDACTED]
Villa Rica, GA 30180
[REDACTED]

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

I am Donna Camp. I have had the pleasure of knowing Weldon W. Stewart Jr. for the past 9 years. I am writing to express my strong support for Mr. Stewart to be granted bail. I have gotten to know Weldon, of which I consider a friend, through Lori Stewart with whom I worked with. As I have only spoken with him, over the years, I have witnessed a continued desire to be involved in educational programs, vocational training & therapy. He has even helped me in my relationship with my grandson. As a certified TESSA Facilitator, WIN, Teacher's Aide in Education, he taught math classes & has held GED classes to prepare inmates to successfully pass the GED exam.

I have witnessed his integrity, honesty, compassion & his remorse for past actions that affected others. Weldon has often spoken of his love for his family. Over the years I have also continuously witnessed personal growth & a commitment to a positive future.

Weldon has also shared the success as the founder of the Cats of Trenton Correctional Program. They feed and provide medical care to the cats at the Trenton Correctional facility. They work with the local government, vets and non-profits to achieve the best for these animals.

Weldon has the support of his family, friends & his community. I have known Lori, his wife, a little longer than I have known Weldon. I know she is a responsible, law-abiding citizen, who has a stable home for Weldon to come home.

From my observations, I fully support Weldon's application for bail.
Thank you for your consideration in granting bail.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Donna Camp

Donna Camp
[REDACTED]

Michelle Gordy

[REDACTED]
Troy, SC 29848
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

April 14, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter as a character reference for Weldon W. Stewart, Jr. in support of his request to be granted bail while his case is under further investigation.

In December 2023, my pastor, Reverend Chuck Keller, visited Trenton Correctional Institution to assist with their Christmas dinner. During his visit, he met Weldon, who was affectionately known as the "Cat Whisperer" due to his deep care and concern for the cats on the institution's yard. Weldon shared his worries about the cats' well-being with Pastor Chuck, who, in turn, reached out to me, believing I could help.

Since that time, I have had the privilege of collaborating with Weldon (through his wife), his wife Lori, and a captain at the institution on an extraordinary effort to spay, neuter, and vaccinate 62 cats and find adoptive homes for 41 of them. This remarkable initiative would not have been possible without Weldon's dedication, compassion, and unwavering commitment to these animals. He played a pivotal role in getting this project off the ground, working tirelessly to ensure its success.

Weldon's actions demonstrate his selflessness and genuine concern for the well-being of others, even in challenging circumstances. His ability to inspire and organize efforts to improve the lives of these animals reflects his strong moral character.

I sincerely hope you will take this letter into consideration as you review Weldon's request. His actions and the impact he has made speak volumes about the kind of person he is.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Michelle Gordy

04/22/2025

Supreme Court of South Carolina
1231 Gervais Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Justices of the South Carolina Supreme Court:

Hello, I am writing to express support for Mr. Weldon Stewart being granted bail.

My name is Cynthia Crim. I live in Johnston, South Carolina. I am not related to Weldon, but if he had grown up here in Edgefield County, I probably would have taught him in my 20+ years of teaching here. Therefore, he would have been one of my children. I am so proud of, and grateful to Mr. Weldon W Stewart, Jr., for taking the initiative to care for Edgefield's overwhelming stray cat population.

I would like to express my strong support for Weldon Stewart, Jr's petition for bail. If he can accomplish from the outside, even half of what he accomplished on the inside, we would all be truly beholding to him. The act of pulling a community together to care for an overwhelming population of stray animals is amazing. If you are unaware of the stray cat issue in Edgefield, I can explain it really quick. Many years ago, Disney did a remake of "That Darn Cat" in downtown Edgefield. If you see the movie, you will see a scene where a large number of cats escape from my cat show. These cats were supposed to have been fixed, and ALL were to be taken back into the movie company's custody by the end of that day. That did not happen.

I am the lucky recipient of one of Weldon's cats. She is not the brightest by any means. She continuously had issues with the razor wire and received severe injuries to her body. Poor girl lost half of her tail and had severe injuries to her feet and legs. However, I think that she is beautiful! I am forever grateful that Weldon, with the help from his wife, was able to find me and get that precious cat a safe forever home. Several years ago, I was the victim of an impaired driver. Not only was my teaching career ended but also my ability to run and walk. So, I have a soft spot in my heart for animals and humans in the same position. Weldon has the same soft spot and wishes to continue his work in our county once he is released.

My cell phone number is [REDACTED]. My email address is [REDACTED].

Thank you very much for your time and if I can answer any questions for you, please feel free to reach out.

Sincerely,

Cynthia E Crim