

Olin (Ben) Coones
Testimony In Support of HB 2131
House Judiciary Committee
January 30, 2025

My name is Olin (Ben) Coones, I am here today to speak for my father. Nearly 16 years ago our family was torn apart by corruption, misconduct, and the lies told by others.

After my father's arrest, he was charged and convicted of a murder, he did not commit. One of the key pieces of "evidence" brought against him were the words of a man named Rupert. A man that neither my father, nor his family had ever even known. A man who told lie after lie to a jury who believed him. And whose testimony ultimately led to my father's conviction, and nearly 13 years of imprisonment, for a crime he did not commit.

IF the jury had perhaps known the fact that Rupert had made a deal and bargained for his benefit for his testimony. Or perhaps that he had been coerced into giving it by immoral actions of the DA. **IF** perhaps the jury had known that Rupert had done this time and time again. **IF** my father's defense been given the knowledge and review of his testimony prior to trial, so that they may have prepared and researched a better defense. **IF** like any other expert testimony, Rupert had been made to appear before the judge and be reviewed before giving his testimony.

IF any of these things had happened my father would still have had the chance be with us today. He would have been able to seek the necessary treatment for the cancer that ultimately took his life. The cancer that grew inside him while he was in prison and claimed his life only 108 days after his exoneration. After all the lies and deceit have been brought to light and seen for what they were, 3 months seems an unfair reward.

Though after everything he had to suffer, my father's deepest wishes were to make sure nothing like this could happen to another innocent. To give everyone the chance to defend themselves and for only the truth to be spoken in court. My father believed that the system would always find a way to bring justice and truth to light. Perhaps if this bill had been in place 16 years ago, he would still be here today.

The course of history can be altered by the words of a single individual. In our case the lies spoken against my father left a legacy of pain and suffering that no longer has a chance to be corrected. If there is any possibility for a positive impact and lesson that could be learned from our story, it would be to honor my father's wishes. To help make sure that other innocents and families do not have to endure what we have. We urge you to pass HB 2131.