

To Whom It May Concern,

In August, 2020, my daughter, Leighton Rock, came home and was very upset. My kids have always been very open and honest with me and their dad, so we weren't surprised when she came to us. Leighton had been with a few friends in her car, and they were smoking marijuana. She says she wasn't, but I'm not disputing that, nor am I a parent who thinks my child does no wrong. She was in her car, and it's illegal. We'd mentioned to her numerous times about both drinking AND smoking. They are illegal, despite whether you think they should be or not.

At any rate, she said that the two guys she was with were picked up by their parents (they were 17), and she was let go. A Deputy Blake with the Sheriff's Department essentially told Leighton that she wasn't being ticketed, but would be contacted later. He told her "if you scratch our back, we'll scratch yours".

Her father and I decided immediately that she wouldn't be scratching anyone's backs. She was 3 weeks into 18 years old. She had just gone through the WORST 6 months of her short life. She didn't get to finish her senior year. She got exposed to Covid right before graduation, and did NOT get to walk across the stage. She found out that her college was going to be remote for Freshman and Sophomores, so together we made the decision that she'd go to JCCC instead of going away, since classes were by remote anyway. Under no circumstances were we going to allow her to "scratch the back" of anyone that could ultimately harm her or her younger sister, who still goes to the same High School with the younger boys Leighton was with.

Again, Leighton had "just turned 18". Her dad and I decided to be pro-active, so the next day, we drove to the Sheriff's Department, asking to speak to Deputy Blake. We were told he was not in, and we asked if we could leave a message for him to call us. They took a message. It was never returned.

We then asked what we needed to do in terms of Leighton. The man at the counter looked her name up, and said he saw nothing. He sent us to the Adult Prison/Police Department in Olathe. My husband took Leighton there, and again – we were told there was nothing on record in terms of Leighton. His exact words were "I don't think you have anything to worry about".

Fast forward a few months. Leighton was in school, and working full time. She was in a parking lot after work with co-workers, and a cop pulled up, and essentially told her that she had a warrant out for her arrest. "Failure to Appear".

Again, we did "all the things". Called all the people listed above (again, no return call from Dep Blake), and was told that they didn't see any failure to appear. We'd gotten nothing in the mail, Leighton had gotten nothing, and she'd received no phone call or voice mail messages.

In December, 2020, I had the chance to talk to a Shawnee Mission Police Officer. He was kind enough to look up Leighton Rock, 7/18/02. He read, out loud, the entire report to me. Nowhere in the report did it say that she had failed to appear, OR that there was an arrest warrant. He also told us we didn't have anything to worry about – she should relax.

Monday, February 15, two Shawnee Police Officers appeared at our front door. They wanted Leighton Rock, 7-18-2002. Our 18 year old daughter. She had a warrant out for her arrest. So now, months and months later...there is suddenly a warrant out for her arrest? THEN...the police tell us not to worry, it's just a misdemeanor. She can go turn herself in, and it will be no big deal. It's a MISDEMEANOR. A MISDEMEANOR. The officer went on to explain that because Leighton was "caught" by a Sheriff's Deputy (rather than by a police officer in a city), he had no right to issue her a citation with a court date. It was a misdemeanor, and because of Covid, they let her go. She was told that she'd be contacted if "they needed her". She was NEVER contacted.

What happened next is not only heartbreaking, it is disheartening, and makes me angry at both the judicial system, the legislature, and the very police who we repeatedly tell our children they can trust, when in reality, they all failed her. The system failed her.

Leighton turned herself in on Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup>. My husband was with her. They said it wouldn't take long. She was put in a jail cell with a woman who had beaten her mother. At this point...we are still thinking "lesson"...she will learn from this. 7 HOURS LATER, after being moved from that cell, to a cell that contained inmates that had done FAR WORSE than a misdemeanor, we realized that we'd made a mistake. We should have come armed with every attorney we knew, and a list of every deputy, lieutenant, police officer, and member of the judicial system who had told us repeatedly that "we don't see anything...she has nothing to worry about". I won't even begin to tell you the things that were said to her, and how she was treated while she was there. All 5 feet, 90 pounds of her.

Was my daughter wrong? Yes. But if she'd been caught one mile over – she'd have been issued a ticket with a court date, but without being arrested, mug shot taken, mug shot then being sent around to every student, teacher, employer and friend that she'd ever had. Prospects of being an elementary school teacher? GONE. Because the system failed her. She will never forget, though, being spit on, or called names, or having the police officers in the jail laugh at her when she went to ask them what was going on. This...was a 5 ft, 90 pound teenager who made ONE MISTAKE, and was treated like a hardened criminal. If the Sherriff's department had the ability to issue a citation with a notice to appear in court, my little girl, with a MISDEMEANOR, would not have been dealt this hand. It took us 3 days to get her out of bed. 3 days for her to stop saying she was going to kill herself. 3 days to stop saying she had nothing to live for.

These wrongs could have easily been made right...if there was a law that legislature passed that allowed the officer who pulled her over to issue her a citation, despite the uniform he was wearing. Get it right, Kansas. I have a 18 year old daughter who is traumatized. Hopefully that was the affect you intended when you issued an arrest warrant, vs allowing the deputy to issue

a citation with a court date. My daughter will never be the same, and will likely never trust the police, or the system that is supposed to protect her, again.

Sincerely,

Denise Rock