

Michael VonAllmen
Testimony in Support of HB 1422
Before the New Hampshire House Judiciary Committee
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Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to share my story with you today. My name is Michael VonAllmen and I am an exoneree from Kentucky. **Today, I am here to testify in support of HB 1422 because there should never be a definitive deadline – let alone, a three-year deadline – to prove your innocence. I know, because it took me 27 years to prove my innocence.**

The story of my wrongful conviction starts in 1981.

In 1981, a man walked into a bar in South Louisville, abducted a young lady and took her to a park where he raped her, sodomized her, and robbed her. The victim noticed the guy staring at her all night earlier at a bar and was able to put together a composite drawing of him. The police circulated it the night after the assault.

The following night, I walked into the same bar without a clue about what happened. But the patrons and owners at the bar were looking back and forth at the composite drawing and me – and when I left, they jumped in the car and followed me.

According to the victim's account, the police were looking for someone with a green car. I had a blue Volkswagon but when I pulled into the parking garage, next to my neighbor's green chevrolet, the people from the bar said to themselves, "there's the green car!" They submitted my license plate number to the police, a photo pack was made with my picture in it, and at the time, the photo pack only had the five big white guys in it.

That's what it was. The victim got to the photo of the only curly headed man and said, "it kind of looks like this guy but I can't be sure." The officer concluded the lineup. A week later, the police had her look at the same photo pack and when she got to the big curly headed guy again, she

made the same comment but later made a positive ID due to suggestive police practices and pressure.

When I came out from work, I found out I had three felony warrants on me. Immediately, I gathered my alibi witnesses and every moment of my life was accounted for. But it was the brutality of the crime that decided my fate.

I was convicted and sentenced to 30 years, but still worked to prove my innocence as best I could. I was wrongfully incarcerated for the next 11 years until I was released on parole in 1994. I worked to rebuild my life while still trying to prove my innocence. Some of the hardest moments were when I had to disclose I was a convicted sex offender.

One day I unfolded the newspaper and there was an article about the Kentucky Innocence Project getting a grant from the government to investigate wrongful convictions. I cried like a baby and then I called them.

The investigation revealed the biological evidence, that I was previously told was destroyed, was located but DNA testing only generated the victim's profile. It wasn't until later that the investigation uncovered this textbook example of eyewitness misidentification. There was another man, a convicted felon who previously committed similar offenses and looked like me. Unfortunately, he died in a police chase – in a green car.

With this newly discovered evidence, the judge vacated my conviction without hesitation, issuing a ruling from the bench. I was finally exonerated. Just like that, 27 years of being a convicted sex offender is wiped off and it's starting a whole new life.

This is why I support HB 1422. My case did not have DNA testing or a constitutional claim. Had I been in New Hampshire, I would have likely served the full thirty years of my sentence with absolutely no hope of getting back into court.

As I prepared to speak with you today, I learned that New Hampshire has only recorded three known exonerations, the least in the nation. I can tell you that there is nothing about the borders of New Hampshire that shields it from the human behavior or systemic failures that lead to wrongful convictions.

I urge you to support this bill which would allow people to get in the door to prove their innocence.