

## Written Testimony of Michelle Root

Before the House Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security  
Hearing Titled, "The Real Victims of a Reckless and Lawless Immigration Policy: Families and Survivors Speak Out on the Real Cost of This Administration's Policies"

April 19, 2016

Chairman Gowdy, Chairman Goodlatte, respected members of the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, my name is Michelle Root and I appreciate the opportunity to be the voice of my murdered daughter, Sarah Rae-Ann Root. Sarah was murdered on January 31st by drunk driver and illegal immigrant Edwin G. Mejia less than 24 hours after walking with a 4.0 grade point average for her Bachelor of Science Degree in Investigations from Bellevue University.

On behalf of my family, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Chairman Goodlatte and Senator Grassley and their staff for drawing attention to Sarah's case by demanding answers from ICE and supporting my family through these trying times. I would also like to thank the senators and staff of Senators Ernst, Fischer, Sasse and Sessions for their help and support.

We also thank the investigative officers and their superiors at the Omaha Police Department who made multiple requests to ICE officials for an immigration hold and were rebuffed in their efforts due to the Obama administration guidelines that deemed him not a threat to public safety.

Sarah was my only daughter. She was full of life and such a joy to be around. She made me want to be a better person because she was so amazing. She always put others before herself, no matter how busy she was and let me tell you, she was a busy girl. Sarah was smart, beautiful and caring, hardworking and treated people with kindness and respect.

Sarah and her brother Scott were as close as two people could be, they were not only siblings but great friends. They often talked about the future and what they wanted to do. Sarah would seek his advice and Scott hers.

She wanted to go on and get her Master's degree after she graduated with her Bachelor's however that was not to be the case because her life was cut short. Sarah's dad Scott could not be here with us today as he is at Edwin Mejia's immigration hearing in Omaha which is taking place the same time as this hearing.

He is just as devastated as the rest of Sarah's family and friends. Not a second goes by that we don't think of her and what she as well as we are missing out on. She will never get to live out her "American Dream," because that was taken away from her. We will keep fighting to get the justice that Sarah deserves.

The arrest and conviction of Edwin will not bring my Sarah back, but it will give my family and her friends closure and the knowledge that justice has prevailed. Despite all the tragedy, Sarah is the hero in this story. She was an organ donor and unselfishly saved the lives of six individuals through her donation and helped another four dozen through her donation of tissue and bone.

America is a nation of immigrants, legal immigrants. My family like many Americans holds no ill will to people who desire the American dream, we just ask that controls be put into place to control the entry and that they be documented and vetted through legal means so if such an incident were to occur again they could be held accountable and another family would not have to experience the pain and frustration that our family and Sarah's friends have experienced.

We urge the members of Congress to support meaningful immigration reform through the support and passing of legislation such as Kate's Law; The Refugee Program Integrity Restoration Act and the Davis Oliver Act that empowers local governments and law enforcement and forces ICE to take an illegal immigrant into custody when requested by local law enforcement like what occurred in my daughter's case.

Edwin Mejia spent four days in jail and is believed to have fled the area and possibly the country after posting \$5,000 bail. Less than the amount it cost to bury my baby. Because of the lack of controls, the police, immigration, U.S. Marshals and law enforcement have little or no information on his whereabouts on him, his family and acquaintances. He and those who protect and hide him are cowards.

Edwin was not a stranger to law enforcement and failed to honor his legal obligations for minor traffic infractions. Now a failed local judicial system that set his bail too low coupled with flawed Obama administration policies have rewarded the illegal and punished my family and hampered law enforcement in their investigations.

Thank you again for your time and allowing Sarah's voice to be heard.

Sincerely, the family of Sarah Rae-Ann Root.