

ORIGINAL

FILED

JAN 16 2025

OFFICE OF THE CLERK  
SUPREME COURT  
COURT OF APPEALS

Honorable Justices of the Mississippi Supreme Court  
450 High Street  
Jackson, MS 39201

**Re: Carly Madison Gregg, 2024-KA-1178-SCT**

Dear Honorable Justices:

I write with deep respect for this Court and the gravity of the responsibility it holds. I am submitting this letter to express my support for Carly Madison Gregg and to urge the Court to consider the extraordinary circumstances surrounding her case.

I am a God-fearing individual who believes God has a plan for us all, even when marked by tragedy and loss. I have reflected on what His plan for Carly may be, and believe it may be to shine a light on children who struggle with mental illness and on how our justice system can respond with greater understanding, and mercy of those children are in crisis. I have shared with Carly that my hope is that, someday, our justice system will help children like her through a law known as "Carly's Law," designed to provide support, guidance, and appropriate interventions for youth in mental health crisis rather than defaulting to extreme punishment.

How can our justice system reconcile sending a fourteen-year-old child to life without the possibility of parole? It is difficult to believe that a child could fully understand the gravity of what occurred, particularly when those events unfolded during what began as an otherwise normal day on March 19, 2024, and were influenced by circumstances beyond her control.

Carly's childhood ended that day. She was immediately placed in handcuffs, under constant police escort, and removed from everything familiar. She never stepped foot in her home again, never saw her mom, slept in her own bed, or experienced the comfort of safety and normalcy. Most devastating of all, she was never given the opportunity to grieve her mother in a healthy or supported way.

Other children, even adults, facing serious charges are sometimes released on bond, allowing them to return home, receive family support, and obtain meaningful mental health care while their cases proceed. Carly was denied that opportunity. Instead, she was placed into confinement immediately and has remained there ever since. It is important to note that from March 19, 2024, until her trial in September 2024, Carly was a victim of Rankin County's inadequate

accommodations for a juvenile, which exposed her to adults screaming and yelling, and, at one point, she was confined in a cell with an intoxicated adult woman who undressed and screamed at Carly that she should have killed herself. Following this incident, Carly was placed in solitary confinement for the remainder of her time until trial. For several days, her family had no information regarding her location or well-being. Imagine the fear and confusion Carly must have experienced during this period. On that day, she lost her mother and was thrown into an adult world that no child should be subjected to.

To know Carly personally is to love her. It deeply saddens me that the world may never see how intelligent, funny, loving, unapologetically honest and compassionate this child truly is. I personally admire how honest of a child she is. Carly's intelligence is remarkable; she once spoke of wanting to attend MIT, an aspiration that speaks volumes about her brilliance and curiosity. I can only imagine what she could contribute to society if given the chance. Instead, that potential risks being lost, not because of who Carly is, but because she reacted to a medication in a way that was beyond her control.

Our children are our future. They need guidance, protection, and reassurance that they are being heard, especially when they are scared, confused, overwhelmed, or no longer feel like themselves. Too often, children in mental health crisis are treated primarily with medication, without sufficient long-term monitoring, accountability, or comprehensive support. Medical professionals make treatment decisions often never seeing how those decisions affect a child's developing mind and behavior. When a child reacts adversely, it is not the professionals who bear lifelong consequences. It is the child and the family.

Too many incarcerated children are denied meaningful justice simply because their families lack the financial means to secure proper legal defense. Access to quality representation should not depend on wealth, yet public perception and legal outcomes too often reflect otherwise. A recent example involves Nick Reiner, the 32-year-old son of Hollywood producer, Rob Reiner. Nick Reiner killed both his parents and has a documented history of mental illness. Because his family had the resources to retain high-profile legal counsel, the public narrative surrounding that case was framed with sympathy and understanding, emphasizing mental illness as a *mitigating factor*.

Carly, too, has documented mental health struggles, but she was only fourteen years old. Without the benefit of a high-profile defense team, the public response to her case has been harsh and unforgiving. Rather than compassion, she has faced ridicule and calls for her to die in prison. The disparity is striking and deeply troubling.

Justice is defined as the *fair and impartial treatment of all individuals* according to the law. True justice is not a privilege reserved for the wealthy, nor is it measured by the resources a family can bring to a case. Justice demands that every child, regardless of socioeconomic status, be given the opportunity for *fair representation, understanding, and mercy* when appropriate. Denying these fundamental rights because a family lacks means is a betrayal of the principles upon which our legal system is founded.

Through Carly and her advocacy group which I am a member of, I have also learned of an extremely similar case involving another fourteen-year-old child imprisoned for the murder of her mother, *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania v. Jamie Lynn Silvonek, CP-39-CR-0002141-2015*. Since her incarceration, Jamie has done extraordinary things during her ten years in prison. She has become a published author of poetry, written multiple articles advocating for incarcerated youth, appeared on podcasts, and works daily helping to train dogs for adoption to disabled individuals.

Jamie has expressed to me strong sympathy for Carly's situation because, as a juvenile placed in near complete isolation, she too struggled daily to find a reason to keep going. Prison for a child already battling mental health challenges only compounds that suffering. Today, Carly is in that same darkness, facing similar isolation, with little reason to see hope or a future worth carrying on for. Jamie's life now stands as proof that a single moment in childhood, one far beyond a child's emotional comprehension, should not define the entirety of a person's existence.

Society is not safer with Carly Gregg behind bars. Instead, society is deprived of the extraordinary potential of a young person who still has so much to offer. Carly's life has value far beyond the worst moment of her childhood. Knowing Carly and her family personally has enriched my life in ways I never expected. Through them, I have gained clarity, education, and a deeper understanding of how our justice system too often turns its back on children when it does not fully understand the complexities of mental illness in youth. Because of Carly, I am slower to judge and more committed to compassion.

If the public were able to see Carly for who she truly is, I believe the call for mercy in her case would be overwhelming. Advocacy for Carly is not rooted in denial of harm, but in the belief that children deserve treatment, guidance, and the opportunity for redemption rather than permanent condemnation.

Justice is not weakened by mercy. Accountability and compassion can, and must, coexist, especially when children are involved. I respectfully urge this Court to consider whether a sentence that permanently denies a child any opportunity for review or hope is consistent with constitutional principles, evolving standards of decency, and our shared responsibility to protect and guide our youth.

Thank you for your time, your service, and your careful consideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,



**Tara Ashby**

Executive Director

Mercy for Carly Madison Gregg Advocacy