

Witness Testimony

House Criminal Justice Committee Meeting on H.B 139

“Greetings”....

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and to all of the members of the House Criminal Justice Committee; I would like to thank you for allowing me to testify today.

In the past whenever I thought about the possibilities of coming to speak before a distinguished group of people, I thought that the opportunity would be a bookmark moment in my life, something that I'd never forget, well I have to be honest and say It's true I will never forget the reason why I am here but it's nothing like I ever imagined it would be...

I have been a basketball official since 1991 having officiated my first game while a US Army soldier stationed in Vilseck, Germany. I have officiated basketball all across Europe and in at least 5 states and at various levels from small level rec ball to some semi-pro ball.

Not one year in the 32 years and counting of my officiating career that I have not enjoyed being able to run up and down running up and down the basketball court using officiating as a platform to just simply serve other.

My Pastor preaches to learn from our past experiences the good and unfortunately the bad and also like what my Pastor says, I'm going share an experience and throw myself under the bus with the hopes that by my sharing, I can help someone else.

At the beginning of June 2022, a year ago this last week, an email was sent to all of us official belonging to the Greater Cincinnati Basketball Officials Association (GCBOA) that a branch of the Salvation Army in Cincinnati wanted to start up an Adult Basketball League in and wanted some quality officials to assist them with getting their program rolling. Even thou the games had a small game fee I still looked at it as a way to volunteer time to get out and help the Salvation Army do some good in getting a program started. My partner and I were assigned (3) games scheduled at 6:00pm, 7:00pm & 8:00pm for the night of August 3rd, 2022.

Still being new to the Cincinnati area I also look forward to putting my best foot forward when an organization that I have never worked I get a chance to referee for them. You only get one chance to make a first impression!!

My first two games that night went as normal. What I mean when I say normal is that some complaining about certain calls we made but nothing like (excuse my language) "THE HELL" that was get ready break out during that 3rd game. One team actually was made up of most the staff from the Salvation Army where these were being held and they were playing a team of young men from that area. This can was a lot more physically then the previous two and the team of the young men was doing a lot of extra verbal abuse to the officials. At the end of the game, there was (2) of these young men who approached me as I was leaving the court but once the team made up of the Salvation Army staff players got between where I was headed and them, I didn't think much about. I got to my chair where my bad was and sat down to

change my shirt and shoes then out of nowhere I was blind-sided and jumped on and assaulted by these two young men.... They knocked me to ground and stunned me, the Salvation Army staff and others that saw what was happening, was able to get them away from me and help me to a chair, where I am trying to realized what is going on. It is about this time when one of the young men break from the people holding him back and he kicks me in the face as I am trying to gain my bearings while sitting in the chair.... The staff finally get the (2) young men out of the gym and when they come and check on me, I am badly battered, bruised, swollen and beaten... There is blood everywhere from a cut on my right index finger.

These (2) guys beat me... They beat me pretty bad... Like I had personally done something to offend them and I have seen or met either one of them before that night.

The staff ask me did I want them to call for the rescue squad and I said yes but also make sure the Cincinnati Police are also called because I want to file a report. When the Police and Rescue Squad arrived, they asked me did I want to take the ambulance to the hospital and I said no because I didn't want to leave my car there but that I would be going to the hospital because my wife is a nurse. The Officer who filed assault report and with the Captain who runs the Salvation and who witnessed the assault was able to quickly identify who the guys were and he informed me that I would be receive a subpoena through the mail when the guys were caught and my case starting making its way through the court system.

The hardest part for me, even more than the physical injuries was the call I had to my wife when I got to my car and tell her I was jumped and beaten during a basketball game by some adults. When I arrived home, my wife made me go to the hospital where I had to have my face x-rayed because the Doctor thought my jaw was broken, I have to have 4 stitches to close the cut on my finger and I was diagnosed with concussion from having loss consciousness during the beginning of the assault.

5 months later in January 2023, I received pre-trial notification for one of the accused but that the other had not been served his warrant.

The first gentleman after several continuance was finally brought to trial in May 11th, 2023, 9 months after the assault took place and was sentenced to 180 days with 120 days suspended, so he only had to serve 60 days in confinement.

The second gentleman missed at least 3 court dates had a warrant issued for his arrest and was finally caught on May 8th, his trial was held on May 25th and he was given the Max as well of 180 days, the judge gave him credit for the 17 days he already been confined but he had to serve the remaining 163 in confinement.

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