

Representative Smith, Senator Merkley, and Members of the Commission:

Thank you for inviting me to appear before this committee again.

It is an honor to be here.

A lot has happened since I last testified before you.

Some of it has been positive.

Senators, you kept your word.

You worked to improve communication between American Citizens Services and my family.

Dawn has received more visits.

Those visits have lifted her spirits.

She is now able to have a few books.

To some people, those things might seem small.

But to Dawn, they are huge.

They matter.

So, thank you.

Unfortunately, there have also been heartbreaking developments.

Dawn has deteriorated.

There really is no other way to say it.

I visited her in July of this year.

And I did not recognize the sister I saw.

Not the sister I remember from my visit in 2024.

She has aged dramatically.

Her posture is that of someone much older.

She is slumped over.

She is frail.

Her teeth have yellowed and shifted.

Her hair is much grayer than it was just two years ago.

Those are the things I could see.

But there are other changes, too.

Dawn's mental health has deteriorated.

During our visit, it was difficult for her to maintain eye contact.

She struggled to stay focused.

Our conversations would move in many different directions.

She is paranoid.

She becomes agitated easily.

She is angry because she has not been released.

And she keeps asking me the same question.

"When?"

She wants a date.
A date when she will be released.
And I have to tell her:
“I don’t know.”
“I don’t have a date.”
“I can’t give you a date.”
And when I tell her that, she becomes angry.

She tells me that all of this has done is “fill her head with false hopes.”
Senators, imagine what that does to a person after twelve years.
Dawn is also still refusing to have a hysterectomy because of her distrust.
She now tells me she also refuses because she wants the ability to start a family after she is released. She is 54.

I am not here to judge my sister for that.

I am here to tell you what I see.

I see a woman who has spent twelve years incarcerated.

I see a woman whose physical and mental condition has deteriorated.

And I see a woman who continues to hold on to the hope that one day she will be free.

Since my last testimony, our family has suffered another devastating loss. In January, our father, Gene Hunt, passed away. He was 92 years old.

He lived a long life.

But he died with his only daughter still in prison.

Our father died knowing that his little girl was incarcerated.
Dawn was not home when he died.
She could not be there with him.
He could not tell her that he loved her one last time.
He could not see her one last time.
He could not give her words of encouragement.
He could not help her prepare for a life of freedom.
And he could not be there for her if she struggled after twelve years of incarceration.

That should not happen to any parent.

There should have been a different outcome.
But unfortunately, one of the worst outcomes happened.
I want to tell you about our father.
His name was Gene Hunt.
He was an American of Americans.
He served in the Army.
He worked as a skimmer in the steel mills.
He drove a bus for the Chicago Transit Authority.
Then he joined the Chicago Police Department.
He served there for 32 years.

He worked hard.
He worked multiple jobs to take care of his family.
He was always trying to better himself for us.
That was our father.
That was how he lived.
He believed in working hard.
He believed in serving his country.
He believed in taking care of his family.
This is what we were taught.
This is what we were taught it means to be an American.
You work.
You serve.
You take care of your family.
You keep going.
Even when life becomes difficult.

My family has suffered greatly, Senators and Congressmen.
Unnecessarily so.
And now the full burden falls on my shoulders.
I came back before this committee for a few reasons.
First, to thank you.
Second, to tell you what is happening to Dawn.
And third, to tell you what is happening to our family.
There are no happy stories I can tell you about reunification.
There is no story about our father caring for my sister after she came home.
There is no story about Dawn rebuilding her life.
There is no story about Dawn getting better and moving forward.
Because she is not home.
It has been twelve years.

Twelve years.
Dawn continues to suffer the most.
My father suffered until the day he died.
And now I am left carrying the burdens that remain.
The load is heavy, Senators and Congressmen.
Very heavy.

And I sit before you again—humbly.
Without pride.
And without politics.
I am simply asking you for help.
Our government requested humanitarian release for Dawn in May of 2025.
For that, Dawn and my family are grateful.
But to the best of my knowledge, there has been no follow-up request.
So today, I am asking you directly:
Please use your voices.
Please ask President Trump to ask President Xi to release Dawn.
And please ask for the release of Nelson Wells Jr. as well.
I need your outside voice.
I need help.
I need help that is on equal footing with what has been done for others.
I need help for the average American.
The two-job American.
The three-job American.
The American who served his country with honor and pride.

The American who struggled.
But survived.
The American who wears that survival as a badge of honor.
The American who keeps going when there are obstacles in his path.
The American who puts out the flag on Memorial Day before the
barbecue.
That is my family.
That is the family Dawn grew up in.
We are ordinary Americans.
And we are proud of it.
We have asked for help.
We have waited.
We have suffered.
And we are still asking.
Senators, please don't let another year pass.
Please don't let another birthday pass.
Please don't let another holiday pass.
Please don't let another family member die without Dawn being home.
Twelve years is a very long time.
My father did not get to see his daughter come home.

I am asking you to help make sure that I do.
And, more importantly, that Dawn does.
Thank you for hearing me.