To Whom It May Concern:

I have started this letter several times. I cannot seem to find the words to elicit much needed change. All I can do is tell you my story. A story I have given up all hope on and was not even going to write this letter until my daughter called me today hysterical and now terrified.

I wrote Shannon Hinchcliffe about a matter I am having with the Clallam County Courts. I apologize; I have to tell you about my issue to get to the point of this letter. I will try to be brief if at all possible.

I am currently in a domestic violence situation. I am in hiding in Clallam County from a very dangerous individual. I got a traffic ticket for not wearing a seatbelt. I pled guilty to the 1st ticket and paid the fine and asked the court to seal the record, which was done without incident, argument or commentary. Matter of fact, Judge Porter seemed very concerned and helpful. He never once expressed any concerns or hesitations. The only concern was that I used the wrong form but once he found out that the prosecutor had drafted up a corrected one, he was more than happy to sign my order.

A few months later I got the same ticket. As I have stated all along, I am not trying to make excuses or break the law intentionally. Due to what I stated above, I am overwhelmed which is an understatement. My daughter and I are trying to rebuild our lives and move on in a place where we know no one, have no support system, all the while we are living under constant surveillance to protect us while my ex is using all possible means necessary to find us. My ex won't stop trying to find us. He has a felony assault conviction, has violated the restraining order several times and several other assaults that were not charged due to lack of evidence. The day in question I just got some more news from my lawyer and my daughter was struggling with some issues there as well and we were just both very overwhelmed and I was trying to explain things to a 17 year old who doesn't understand why the legal system is not doing anything to protect us. My ex has filed over 200 motions in another court using the legal system to now harass me. Well with the lack of understanding and help in this difficult legal situation for people in our situation she was arguing with me about what was going on and why legal system is not helping us and I once again forgot my seatbelt in all the commotion and trying to get out of town for the day for us to have a break even briefly from the constant chaos. Since that time, 8-29-2017 I have been trying to get my info off of your court website as the longer it appears there the more danger we are in using the GR 15 Rule.

My abuser knows where I work. I work for Wal-Mart there are only two in Clallam County so seeing where I got the ticket; it would not take much to find us. This time however; the same Judge, Judge Porter did not understand that if he seals the record he is not sealing it with Department of Licensing. Judge Porter, I felt, was more hell bent on putting me in my place and humiliating me in court because I did it twice than listening to the real problem. Now he stated he had an issue with it because he feels I could be masking a criminal record. I DO NOT HAVE A CRIMINAL RECORD. Something I had repeated to him 3 times and he ignored me. Judge Porter stated it is preventing the DOL from seeing my real driving record and it also prevents the insurance companies from the same and does not give them a true picture of my driving history and criminal record. He pulled his clerk in there who told him it does not affect anything but the Washington State Website and again GR 15 was discussed. The clerk told the Judge that the record still goes to DOL. The judge then stated he wanted the clerk to ask the AOC. If the AOC says he can sign it, then he will but until then no. The clerk stated he went to the AOC and they told him they were forwarding it to the legal department. I spoke with the DOL and they confirmed that they still had record of my tickets and the insurance companies can still see them. They are not being sealed or masked as the judge suggests. This in turn led me to write a letter to the AOC much like the one I am writing today. I contacted a lawyer. I was prepared to sue the state of Washington. A day later the judge heard back from the AOC and found that this criminal record he was referring to, this committing a felony he kept accusing me of, he was in fact incorrect. It is for people with commercial driver's licenses. Something I do not have. So I ask why is it the judge wouldn't even listen to his clerk. GR 15 was set up for this very issue; the problem is it's after the fact. It puts the info up forcing us to ask to remove it and go through issues like this in court. What happens if I get another ticket for anything? Tail light out, headlight. The pressure of not being able to breathe for fear of getting a ticket. Could you drive like that? That one simple ticket is a possible death sentence? Now be a 17 year old girl who grew up in the violence and knows full well what the man is capable of and a new driver and be so worried you may make a mistake. Such as what happened today.

So here it is, October 7th, 2017. I got the ticket August 28th. I tried to be proactive about it. I tried to get the ticket off BEFORE it went on there. Nope. I was told that I need to send the judge a letter to mitigate it; he sees them faster I was told. This was also not true. Do you know by the time I went to court on this issue on September 28th my information has already been up there a month and the judge had not even read my letter to mitigate it. I have been at risk for a month. I don't know how long it was up beforehand because I was under the assumption that it did not go on the website until after it had been disposed. Not the case it goes up the minute the officer gives you a ticket. This HAS got to change. So now, the judge on September 29th states he will sign the order after putting me through hell and having to write letters to the AOC. Now on the 29th he reads my mitigating circumstances and fines me 135.00. Which is the standard rate, but I asked for leniency given the circumstances. I was granted none. Because this judge doesn't believe in that if you repeat your mistake. So here it is October 7th and I do not have one dime to pay to get my ticket off the record and quite honestly, I have given up. I feel like my abuser already has won. I am so tired of fighting. I want you to understand I made a mistake but that mistake not wearing a seatbelt should not be worth my life or that of my child. Every day that it was up there put our lives in danger. So now it's all on me not the judge because I am not paying the bill. I would still pay the bill but the courts can't seal it or take it off if I don't pay it first. There is nothing in place to allow me to pay it after they take it off which makes me feel like they are blackmailing me with my own life. Pay or else….When I said to the judge the longer it's up there the more I am in danger his response to me was well one more day isn't going to matter is it? Really? One more day could be the difference between life or death but if he doesn't care why should I anymore? Why should I continue to keep fighting for my life when no one cares?

The judge was okay with it before but because I did it again, he was mad, which I understand to a degree but GR 15 clearly states that when the threat to a person is more important than the publics need to know then the record could be sealed. I am not trying to hide anything but my whereabouts for our safety. I am not trying to mask anything. He just kept saying there was some ruling about not being able to mask a felony. I do not have a felony; I do not have any gross misdemeanors or misdemeanors. I had a civil traffic infraction. I am at a point in my life where I am so tired of fighting the legal system to protect us when they are working against us that I just am ready for him to find me and put me out of my misery. I have given up all hope. The legal system has treated me and my daughter like the criminals instead of helping fix a problem that exists and puts us in danger.

I have given up. I was not going to write this letter at all until today, my daughter was pulled over because my tags are expired. 1. I did not know they were expired. 2. I do not have the money because every ounce of money I have left over is going to the lawyer to protect me, which I have court on the 13th of this month. I have to face a man who has raped me twice, assaulted me numerous occasions and now worry he will follow me home over child support. For the last year he has dragged me into court almost every other week if not every week over frivolous motions. They have written slanderous letters to my employer. I have been stalked for over a year and a half so I have no doubt he probably already knows where I am.

I make good money but I can't even afford to feed us and I have to worry now about paying a 135 dollar ticket just to get it off the website for our safety and now I have 30 days to pay to get my tags fixed to keep that from going on the record because if I do not pay it in 30 days I don't even know how much but if I do not pay it then she stated they will issue me a ticket and it will go back on the website and I will be in front of that same judge again. What will he do to me then? Throw me in jail because I am masking a criminal record? To add insult to injury we are in the Address Confidentiality program which protects our address. It's on my license; my vehicles are registered to it. It is what I was told to do to protect us. The Deputy that pulled my daughter over proceeded to tell her that we are violating the law because we will not give out our home address. My daughter refused so she used her school address. So now he will know what school she goes to if I do not pay the damn ticket in 30 days when she mails her and that becomes public record. I called the Sergeant today to get that rectified and they are not familiar with the Address Confidentially program and they won't fix it. Despite the program clearly states we do not have to provide our physical address. So now I have a hysterical 17 year old who feels like she just signed our death warrant?

So that is why I am writing this letter. I have given up. I don't have any more fight left in me. But I have to protect my daughter or give her peace of mind that isn't really there. I have to lie to my daughter and tell her everything is okay when it's not. I have to make her feel that we are safe when the reality is, we are not. The legal system is set up to deal with things after the fact. Not preventing it. They are set up to let things happen and when he kills me, and he will. I know it's just a matter of time whose fault is it? Is it mine for doing everything I could to fight a system not set up for us?

Is it the legal system for failing us at every turn? All the sergeant could tell me today when I complained about it was Welcome to Washington Laws. Well I am sure that will be a consolation to my family at my funeral. If it sounds like I am being too dramatic, I am. But it's not drama its reality. Mine. Until you have lived it, you can't possibly understand how bad it really is. My reality is quite simple. I am living on borrowed time. I will die at his hands and there is nothing that anyone can do to stop it. It won't matter if I pay the 135 or the other fees because Washington State already gave him the tools to find me. They won't try to fix it unless I pay. My ransom is 135 dollars and whatever the fix it ticket is.

All I can do at this point is make you aware of what is wrong with the system and pray that the next woman and child in the same situation doesn't have to fight and lose like I have. That hopefully you will see how wrong this system is and fix it for the next people.

The courts have already gone on record saying my life is really only worth 135.00 dollars and a fix it ticket. Judge Porter can explain to my daughter why when this man finds me why he felt it necessary to keep me on the website and humiliate me over a criminal record I do not have. They can explain to her not to get upset when she has seen and been traumatized by a man whom she has seen most of her life beat her mother and sister that we are violating a law that was supposed to be to protect us. They gave us the tools to use and then rammed them down our throat and used it against us.

If this doesn't disturb you and show you there needs to be change, nothing will. All I wanted to do was get us away from a very bad situation but it seems that is impossible because all the help that is promised is not there. I just wanted to keep us safe. I have failed at that, I have failed my daughter. I alone have to live with apparently being so irresponsible I got a ticket for not wearing my seatbelt. That is on me. It's on me that I cannot protect my child. I tried.

Do you have any idea what it's like for a 17 year old to feel like if she makes one mistake driving such as expired tags it literally could mean the end of our life. I ask that you please change the rules to keep information off the website until we can prove or disprove our situation for victims of domestic survivors. Stop putting us at risk before you get your money. Stop making money more important than our lives. Stop being reactive and start being proactive. Just like the song if I die Young says, "Funny when you're dead how people start listening" Don't let this be the case like it is so many other times.

Sincerely,

A[redacted] C[redacted]