

Senate Judiciary Committee Activity Hearing: Protecting Our Children Online Against the Evolving Offender

December 2025

Our names are Timothy and Tamia Woods, and we are speaking on behalf of our beautiful son, James Timothy Woods. We are adults who continue to live, but James has a forever age of 17 years old. We stand here today, not only as a mother and father, but as a mother and father whose child was taken by something so preventable, so cruel, and so ignored that it should violently shake every person in this room to their core. No child should ever lose their life. And no parent should have to lose their child, especially one who is not an adult yet. The natural order of things throughout history is supposed to be to grow old enough to bury our parents. Not the other way around. Our son James, before he was murdered, was mentally tortured, humiliated and pushed to be a person that he never was. Numerous messages were sent to James throughout the night and morning of the next day, that no person should ever be presented with.

One of the messages sent to James said and we quote:

"I am more determined to rot your life than to make it a waste, a trash can, a shame, a dishonor, a hell, a real disaster, a hell on earth. And I remind you that I am heartless, I have no pity to rot a life as well as yours."

This was one of almost 200 messages sent to our child, over the span of 19.5 hours between November 18th and 19th, 2022. James was the victim of financial sextortion, and though he died by suicide, let's be clear: HE WAS MURDERED!

James in our eyes, is a beautiful young man with a soul like gold. He never set out to hurt anyone. He was a person who tried to make everyone's life around him better. Frowns and sour moods were things that James always would try to reverse. Joy and happiness are what he exuded. James is the helping hand you can still see in real life, guiding, comforting, and lifting others the same way he always did. He would give you the shirt of his back. His compassion for others and his willingness to want better lives for the people around him made him a breath of fresh air in a place with nothing but non-breathable smoke. With his mind, always soaking in information and ever evolving, he could figure out anything as long as he had the information to properly make the right decision. Witty, thoughtful, kind, humble and a whole host of other adjectives that exemplified what a great man should strive to be. He had a smile that lit up any room and eyes as bright as the sun. He asked people how their day was because he genuinely cared. People who truly care about others are part of a population of people that seems to dwindle every day.

He was a high school senior that loved sports and games. He could be seen playing video games with his friends whenever he had free time. Yes, video games have their drawbacks. But James spent hours and hours playing chess. A game that has been around for centuries that he wanted to be better at. James had a competitive side to him. He learned the game at an early age and had a goal of being able to consistently beat his father. James' competitive side boiled over into athletics. He loved to play basketball with his friends and race his mom up and down the street. As it turns out running was something that James really loved. There are 365 days in a year and James could be seen running on every single one of them. It could be snow on the ground or a light rain outside and James will still be there. During the school year, James ran cross-country, indoor track, and outdoor track. The school year isn't where his running ended. James would run all throughout the summer around his whole neighborhood so that he could stay in shape. His neighbors knew who he was because he was always running past them and waving while listening to music in his headphones. James always stated that he had to be ready to run at a moment's notice. James got good enough at track to where he was months away from breaking a 40-year-old school record in the 110 hurdles.

Every time we speak of James, we smile because we're grateful for God letting us borrow His angel for roughly 17 years three months 27 days and seven hours. James was and is the best thing to ever happen to us. He was unproblematic, independent, strong willed, and determined. God truly created a being of pure good. We had plans of watching James go off to college to attain a degree in law. He wanted to continue helping people as an adult like he did as a child. He even knew which school he wanted to attend while getting his higher education. We knew that one day he was going to practice law. James' wants and goals was something that we were looking forward to. For James to have his own house. His own family. His own career. **His own ups and downs.** We couldn't wait to see it all. Now, with James no longer here, we live in misery. Every day, we are also angry, sorrowful, depressed, full of regret, and grieving. Uncertainty is what our future now holds.

James was our only child. We knew early on that we couldn't have anymore. With that knowledge, we set out to make sure that James had everything going forward. We gave our lives so that James could be great and it was taken from us by people whose only goal was to mentally torture people into giving them money.

A woman online befriended James on Instagram. She contacted him shortly after 7 p.m. on Friday November 18, 2022. She created what every predator knows how to build: a safe space. She made him feel comfortable, seen, liked. She groomed him. Then she asked if he wanted to see her unclothed. She exposed herself. She asked him to do the same. And like any innocent 17-year-old boy who liked a girl and saw no danger - he did.

That moment she created became their weapon. Then the attackers came. Not one person. We believe at least four. For nearly 20 hours, they attacked, threatened, terrorized, and dismantled our child. Every time he asked, "Why are you doing this to me?" and begged "Please leave me alone", they sent a nude picture. Every time he tried to fight back, they escalated the situation by threatening to send his image to friends and family, telling him that he'd be labeled a pedophile, that he would be expelled from school, that he wouldn't get into college, that he wouldn't be able to get a job, that his friends and family wouldn't love him anymore. Telling him his future was over. The most damning thing that they told James was:

"You should just kill yourself."

What kind of monster would forcefully propel anyone in that direction? Especially a child? And in James' last moments, our son who had everything to live for, felt he had no other choice. A day that started with laughter, college plans, and joy ended with us finding our child, our future, our life's work unalive in our home in the early evening. No parent should ever enter a room and see that.

We stand here because 19 ½ hours is not a short time in the digital world. It is a lifetime.

It is enough time for someone:

- To intervene,
- To flag the account,
- To cancel the messages,
- To report the behavior.

Yet no one stepped in!

No system protected him. No platform stopped it. To us this is disheartening information. Meta has features that flag all inappropriate language that we use when making a post. And it happens almost instantaneously. With all the billions of people who use these applications there can't be a person who monitors everything, so everything has to be reviewed by a computer. So why is it that when we interact through direct messaging a computer isn't monitoring the words and phrases used privately? The system that is used to monitor what goes on our public feeds should be the same system that monitors what is being said in private. We find this unacceptable and negligent. To allow someone to be harmed because it is deemed "private" tells us that as long as it's not in your face it's acceptable. These murderers that are in the Ivory Coast attacked our son for a financial gain while Meta allowed for our son to be attacked for their financial gain. Disgusting! Deplorable! Disgraceful! There are tons of studies that show how social media rots the brain, especially

in adolescence. For there not to be measures that protect people while there are algorithms being used to create junkies to this thing called the Internet shows a lack of compassion.

So, we created the Do It for James Foundation. Since the day James died, November 19, 2022, we have not stopped fighting against the mental oppression that is being placed on the world. We speak, teach, train, and fight so no other parent has to feel the pain that sits in our heart every single moment of every single day.

In 2023, Ohio created the Social Media Parental Notification Act, requiring platforms to get parental consent for children under 16. It passed unanimously. However, when it came time to implement it, the state was sued by NetChoice claiming the law violated the First Amendment Rights of our children.

Large corporations continue to argue for rights while refusing to take responsibility. We are asking you Senators to put laws in place that give us multiple avenues to protect our kids and hold these applications accountable for the damage that they do to the world. Because...

- parental controls alone are not enough.
- "Click here to opt out at age 13" is not protection.
- Predators thrive when the risk is low, but the reward is high.
- These criminals are making billions by exploiting our children. • Because we tell parents, "Monitor your kids better," while platforms refuse to monitor predators at all.

What is monitored is what is done in front of the public, not what is done behind closed doors. That is unfair. Especially when brain development isn't at a point where it can properly protect its host.

How dare we let the blame land on victims while the criminals walk free? Since there is no extradition treaty with the Ivory Coast, we will never see justice for what was done to us. Yes, James is the one that lost his life but us that remain suffered also and continue to do so every waking day.

Today, instead of checking on James' homework, instead of mailing him care packages to his college dorm, cheering for him at track meets, having holiday get togethers, watching him wash his laundry, instead of having him raid our refrigerator, we must hold a picture. A picture that can't hug us back. A picture that can't tell us it loves us. A picture that can't share its new experiences with us. A picture that can't remind us that our hard work and efforts throughout the decades was worth it. Pictures and memories are all that we have

left. Seventeen and a half years of God given pleasures that we should've had for the rest of our lives, was taken away to where no new ones will ever come about.

So, we are asking you, no, we are begging you to stand with us. Stand up! Do something!

Use your power to help us save other children's lives. Help us save other parents and guardians, caregivers, friends and relatives from the heartache that comes from losing a loved one. We may not be able to save them all. But with the right laws, with accountability, with real consequences, we can make it harder for predators to win. So what if the owners and shareholders of these online applications don't get to take that extra trip to their favorite vacation destinations or get to purchase the newest version of their favorite vehicle. People's lives are literally at stake here.

We are not alone in this pain, far too many families share this unimaginable heartbreak. This video holds the names and faces of more than 30 boys who were also targeted and tortured, and whose parents now carry a grief that never leaves. Please take a moment to honor them... read their names, see their faces, and recognize the lives that should still be here with us today.



With your help we can make it harder for another parent to bury their child. Sextortion, grooming and online enticement shouldn't be so easily accomplished. Please. Do it for James. Do it for every child whose name we never got the chance to learn. Most of all, do it to help make the world a better place. We know that your jobs are difficult and what we're asking isn't easily achievable, but you are in a position that we aren't so we have to plead to you to do something that would be for the betterment of others.

We are greatly appreciative for the time that you have invested in this matter.

Timothy and Tamia Woods