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Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

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[Hannah Kubbins](#) / February 2, 2018

A former juror in an Ohio murder trial that sent a man to death row is now asking Gov. John Kasich to pump the brakes on the convicted mans Feb. 13 execution.

Ross Giegers name appears on [the list of Hamilton County Court of Common Pleas jurors](#) who in 1998 convicted Raymond Tibbetts of murder and recommended he be put to death. But in a [Jan. 30 letter](#) to Kasich, Gieger says new evidence has convinced him that the death penalty isnt appropriate for Tibbetts.

I am writing today to ask you show mercy to Raymond Tibbetts by commuting his death sentence to life in prison with no possibility of parole, Gieger writes. This is not an easy request for me as I was a juror on the trial for that horrible crime.

His reasons for the change of heart? Revelations not discussed at trial about horrific abuse Tibbetts suffered as a child, details about his drug addiction, lack of preparation from Tibbetts defense team during the sentencing portion of his trial and other factors.

Tibbetts was convicted of stabbing to death 67-year-old Fred Hicks and beating his 42-year-old caretaker Judith Crawford to death with a baseball bat in Hicks Cincinnati home in 1997. Tibbetts had married Crawford a few weeks prior. Authorities found three knives left in Hicks. The grisly case made big local headlines. Tibbetts was sentenced to death for Hicks death and life in prison without parole for Crawfords.

But important information about Tibbetts background wasnt explored fully during his trial, opponents of his execution say. Tibbetts, who was heavily addicted to opiates and alcohol, had undiagnosed mental illnesses stemming at least in part from a chaotic and unstable childhood. His biological mother and father were mostly absent, according to testimony from his attorneys before a clemency board hearing in January 2017.

When they were around, they were physically abusive. Tibbetts and his siblings were taken from the home when he was two years old, and he then bounced around between different foster homes and orphanages, where he also experienced abuse and neglect.

Research has shown that experiencing abuse can greatly affect a persons long-term mental health and cause a number of behavioral issues. Psychological experts who testified at Tibbetts clemency hearing said that the persistent abuse and neglect rewired his brain, and that his background was a recipe for disaster.

Testimony from Tibbetts sister as well as social service records about his childhood were available but not presented at trial.

Despite these revelations, Tibbetts clemency board voted 11-1 against commuting his sentence. Thats been a pattern: in 2011, the U.S. Court of Appeals also upheld his sentence. But in their decision, the three judges acknowledged that representation at his trial was inadequate.

Another attempt to save Tibbetts from lethal injection failed Feb. 1 when [the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals](#) turned down a constitutional challenge to that execution method.

Tibbetts attorney certainly could have conducted a more thorough investigation into this upbringing, two judges voting to uphold the sentence wrote. But they also argued that the brutality of the crime went beyond that information. But a dissenting judge argued that his attorneys failure to engage in basic preparation meant that his sentence should be reconsidered.

At least one former juror who originally recommended the death penalty for Tibbetts agrees.

Based on what I know today I would not have recommended the death penalty, Gieger writes in his letter to Kasich.

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