

Hello, I am the mother of (insert name), one of the victims of this crime. I am here representing my son and my entire family. On (insert date), at approximately (insert time), I received a phone call. A call that no one wants to receive. Someone called me to tell me that (insert name) was in the (insert name) hospital. My first thought and reaction was that my son got sick, since he was born with health problems (a cyst and a cavernous malformation in his brain) so I got so nervous. The first thing I said was, please he needs help, he has some health problems. Then the person told me that he was in the hospital because he was shot. I felt that my whole world collapsed. I asked her if he was alright and she said that she did not know and didn't have any information.

I remember that day as if it were yesterday. When I received the call, I was lying in bed because I had surgery two days prior. I got up and someone took me to the hospital. When I arrived, (insert name) was on his way to (insert name) hospital in a helicopter. I didn't even get a chance to see him. I felt so much anguish and despair for not having been able to see him and make sure that he was fine, alive. They took me inside to a hospital room to speak with the investigators, and the doctor who treated my son. The doctor told me that he was doing very badly. My son's body was all damaged and the doctor did not know how many bullets he had received since he had many holes in his body, so I asked him if he was going to survive. He told me that he didn't know, since (insert name) body was all damaged. He told me that they were going to operate on (insert name) as soon as he got to the hospital. That's the day our nightmare began.

You can already imagine, or maybe not, how I felt. My son was in a helicopter on the way to the hospital, seriously injured, and I did not know if I was going to see him alive when I arrived at the hospital. I remember having a hard time breathing. Even right now as I'm writing this status, it's hard for me to breathe. My chest hurts and I feel sad just remembering that day- to the point that I have tears in my eyes.

I went to the hospital and when I got there, they wouldn't let me in because it wasn't visiting hours and (insert name) was in surgery. One of the social workers got my information and told me that she would make sure the doctor called me when the surgery was done. That night was one of the longest nights of my life. I was so anxious and praying to God in the name of his son Jesus to let my son live. I was very afraid that (insert name) would die. I felt anxious to see him and, at the same time, I felt powerless because I couldn't do anything for him but pray and ask God for his life.

I remember that I couldn't sleep all night. Every second I looked at my watch and waited anxiously for the call from the doctors to find out about my son. To me, the minutes seemed like hours, and the hours like years. Around 4 or 5 am, the call that I had been waiting so long for arrived. The doctor called me and informed me that my son had already undergone surgery and was in the ICU and that everything seemed fine. That call gave me a peak of consolation, but I wanted to go in to see my son. I couldn't see him until after 9 am, which is the time that the visits begin, due to the covid.

I remember that when I entered the room where (insert name) was, it was a horrible scene. The truth is, I did not expect to see him like this. He was connected to many machines and intubated. I had a big shock. It seemed that he was dead. It was a tremendous shock for me. I started to cry and a nurse came to comfort me. For the next few days, I prayed every day for my son to wake up from his coma. I think he woke up on the sixth day, thank God. When it was almost time for me to leave, he wanted to talk, but I told him to calm down and that everything was okay. I told him that he can't talk because he was

intubated. He started to cry. I told him I wanted him to know that he did nothing wrong, and that none of this was his fault. I told him I wasn't mad at him and that I love him, and he calmed down.

Due to the gunshot injury, (insert name) underwent many surgeries in a short period of time. I estimate that it was about 9-15 days. Sometimes the doctors let his body rest for one or two days and then they would take him back to the surgery room. He spent about two months in the hospital, of which one month he was in the ICU.

(insert name) stay in the hospital was not pleasant. He was induced into a coma many times as he was intubated. Some days he was fine and other days his health was not good at all. There were days when I got to the hospital and he was crying because he wanted to go home. He told me that he missed his brother and his dog a lot and he was afraid of being there. He didn't want to sleep sometimes because he was afraid of not waking up. It was a nightmare every time his health worsened. There were times when everything seemed to be going well and then the next minute, he became very sick to the point that his life was in danger. One of the doctors told me that as long as he was in the ICU, it was going to be up and down. The doctor explained that he's here so we can monitor him and help him immediately. Every day I was waking up with the fear that I wouldn't see my son alive.

I have two very marked days, one in which they told me to stay because suddenly (insert name) became very ill. He had a high fever and his heart raced all night long. The nurses and doctors came and went all the time. They couldn't figure out what was wrong with him until the next day. He had pneumonia. Another day when I arrived at the hospital, he was very sick and in a lot of pain and the doctors did not know what was wrong with him, nor could they give him medicine because they did not know what they were going to do. When he saw me he said, " Mom, I'm dying, please get me out of here. I'm in a lot of pain and they don't want to give me anything for the pain. I don't want to die here. I want to go home to see my brother and my dog." I couldn't control my tears. I looked at him and told him that I couldn't do that because I didn't have medication at home to calm the pain. I told him that everything was going to be fine. At that moment, a doctor came and pressed on his stomach and gastric juices and blood began to come out. The doctor told the nurses that it was his pancreas and that they had to operate immediately. They prepared everything and called the team of surgeons and Anesthesiologists. When I heard that, I felt so scared that my son might not make it. The doctor took me by the door of the room to talk to me. He told me that they were doing everything they could, but they were very worried about him and that he was really sorry but things were not looking good.

At that moment, I looked at (insert name) and I went with him. I prayed for him before they took him back and I told him how much I love him. I was watching my son die. I was very afraid that those minutes would be his last minutes alive. I had to be strong, when I didn't want to. All I wanted to do was to scream and give up, but I couldn't. I had to be strong and push my son to be strong. I remember that I repeated to my son over and over again that everything was going to be fine, and he told me, "If everything is going to be fine, why are you crying? Mom, I know I'm dying." I didn't even know what to say to him, so one of the nurses looked at me and him and told him that she was going to visit him when he was in the other room just to distract him. So I told him with tears in my eyes and my broken voice, "I cried because it hurts me a lot to see you like this. You shouldn't be going through this and I wish we could change places so that I was the one in bed and with pain and not you. But I can't and that's why I'm crying. Look, right now they're going to take you to have an operation and you have to be very strong and fight for your life. You know you're very strong and you're going to be able to do it." He only

accentuated the head “yes”. And I said to him, “Remember that your brother and I are waiting for you to come home. We love you very much.”

The medical team took my son to the surgery room around 11 am-12 pm. They told me that surgery would only take 5 hours, but it lasted until around 9 pm. The doctors found many things. One of the bullets damaged the pancreatic tube. The spleen was removed because there was damage by one of the bullets. The colon was detached from the last surgery, so they ended up doing a colostomy, so now he has a colostomy bag that he poops out of, which he hasn't accepted very well. Doctors also left his stomach open.

Every day was a challenge. Some days he used to tell me with tears in his eyes to let him go and that he couldn't fight anymore. On one occasion, I told him with all the pain of my heart, "Listen to me, you're going to keep fighting until the last minute. I'm doing my part. I get up every day, even though I'm tired, to come see you. I leave your brother in the care of your cousin so I can be here for you. So you have to do your part." And he said, “Look at me mom. I'm connected to all these machines. I'm in pain every day and I'm scared.” So I told him, “I know and I understand it, but you have to keep fighting for us. We need you and don't want you to leave us behind, so keep fighting.”

Every day I was scared because every noise made him very anxious and terrified that someone would come and hurt him. He had nightmares almost every day. The hardest part was when visiting hours were over and I had to go home. I couldn't stay because of Covid restrictions. He didn't want to stay in the hospital. He thought that if I wasn't there with him, something bad was going to happen to him and he wanted to go home with me. So an hour before I went home, I had to remind him that it was almost time for me to go home. Half an hour before I left, I had to remind him again. Sometimes he would start crying and get anxious. There were also nights when he would have panic attacks, especially at night. So sometimes they would let me stay because the nurses said that he responded better, and slept better, when I stayed with him. Because when he was alone, he didn't want to sleep. I remember asking him one day why he doesn't want to sleep when I'm not there and he told me that it was because he was afraid of not waking up and that I wasn't there. I had to lie to him so that he would stay calmer. I would tell him that I was not going home and that I was going to stay outside in my car. If something happened he could call me and I would come in right away and I would take care of him from outside.

I asked the medical staff for a psychologist to come see him to help him cope with his fear. I remember the professional asked him, "What is your name?" and he said, "(insert name)." “What is today's date and where are you?” and he said, "I'm in a hospital in (insert name)." The professional then said, “I want you to repeat this every time you feel scared.” (insert name) then said, “I'm (insert name) and today is..... I'm in the hospital in (insert name) and I'm safe. No one can come and hurt me.” So whenever my son would get anxious and scared, he would repeat that. Now he does it at home when he's scared.

Due to his panic attacks, they began to medicate him. To this day, he continues to take medication to help him with his panic attacks. Nowadays we have to talk softly. We cannot make loud noises at home because he freaks out. He says that sometimes he even gets scared when I'm walking in the house. When I open the door to his room, he jumps in fear, so now I have to knock on the door before going in and tell him it's me so he doesn't get scared. He says that sometimes vague memories of what happened come to him and he is afraid. People screaming and trying to find the way out to be safe. He also has flashbacks of that day and feels scared. For a while, I was afraid that he wanted to hurt himself due to

the trauma. Sometimes it used to seem that he was there physically, but not mentally. He used to have a fixed look of fear and he didn't want to leave his room.

I would say that physically he is much better, we are not sure what will happen in the future as he still needs one more surgery to reverse his colostomy. The doctors have not done it because, since they did many surgeries in a short period of time, they say that it would be very imprudent to do it right now. That if they do it, it would not work, and they would have to open his stomach again and intubate him again and he would end up in the same position as before. The doctor says that when they do this kind of surgery, they usually like to wait 3-6 months and then do the reversal, but because my son had a lot of surgeries, it's hard to do it in that short amount of time. So we decided to wait until July to talk about it and see if his body is ready. At this point his future is uncertain. Even though he is back home, we are still dealing with medical appointments and the hardest part, the emotional part.

I don't know when we are going to recover from the trauma that this crime brought us. And I say "us" because it not only affects my son (insert name), who was the one who took the brunt of this crime, but it also affects my youngest son and myself. That somehow we are also victims of this crime. My younger son refused to eat during those first days and experienced emotional stress and depression because his brother was in the hospital. Now, he is receiving therapy for the trauma and the fear of losing his brother. I got diagnosed with PTSD. A few days ago, I let (insert name) go to the supermarket with a friend. Not even an hour had passed since they left when I started to worry and feel anxious. I don't know how to explain this feeling. It's not a good feeling. I felt sick to my stomach. It hurts. I felt desperate because I was afraid that something bad could happen to him again. Even my youngest son asked me if his brother was already at home and I told him not yet and he asked me if I was going to look for him. I told him we were going to wait a bit and if he doesn't come we will go to look for him. I regretted letting him go. Luckily, 10 minutes later he came home. I also sometimes get nightmares and I tend to get up and go check on (insert name) to make sure he is breathing. Now, when my family calls from (insert name), the first thing I always ask is if something bad happened. Sometimes I have flashbacks of when we were in the hospital and everything we went through and I break down in tears. I was so scared to come home without (insert name).

Many people tell me that I am strong. But the truth is that I am not. I simply have no choice or time to collapse. I have to make an effort every day and push myself forward. I have no choice, especially being a single mom. I have to wipe my tears because I don't want my kids to be worried about anything. My children only have me and I have to keep standing and not let myself be defeated because I love them and they are the most important. The only thing I want for them is to be happy, although perhaps at this moment, they are not completely happy due to the trauma that this crime brought us. But I am doing everything in my power to make things better and easier for them. I wish this was just a bad dream, but unfortunately it's not. I wake up and the nightmare is still happening. Almost a year after this crime, and we're still fighting.

All these months, I've felt like I am in a dead end hole, which I want to get out of, but I can't. I feel like I can't find the way out. Unfortunately, (insert name) attackers put us in a really bad position. They almost killed him and us as his family. Because, without him, things would not have been the same. I was afraid every day that my son would no longer come home. The house was quiet and empty without (insert name). I ended up closing his room because it hurt me to get home, pass by his room, and he wasn't there. And I didn't know if he was going to come home. I remember I forced myself to eat because one

of the nurses told me that if I didn't eat, I was going to get sick and then who's going to take care of my children. When I went out to eat, I used to look out through the big windows at how life carried on. People walked and cars passed, while for us life had stopped on (insert date). Nothing has ever been the same.

Even so, they have changed our lives, sinking us into this nightmare. I continue to live in fear of losing (insert name) since his medical treatment continues. It is not over yet. I don't know what will happen in the future. The only thing I know is that these criminals stole our peace and tranquility that we had before this happened. I don't know if we will ever recover from this post-traumatic stress. Right now, I am in therapy, as my two children try to deal with this trauma.

Due to this crime, (insert name) lost half a school year. It was difficult for him to return to his (insert name) program. (insert name) is a program for children with disabilities through the (insert name). He was afraid to go out and was embarrassed to go to the program because of his colostomy bag. He is also taking many medications due to all his physical and mental health problems that this crime brought him. And since he does not have a spleen, he will also be receiving injections for the rest of his life. He takes medicine for anxiety and to help prevent nightmares. Even with taking medication, he gets nightmares from time to time. And when that happens, he doesn't want to go back to sleep because he is afraid. His self esteem is low because of how his body looks due to the surgery. He sometimes feels frustrated and angry about what happened and he tells me why him? And my heart becomes small and I can't wait to cry. I just tell him that things happen for a reason and that God has a mission for him. Due to his illness, (insert name) was restricted from playing sports for many years. The doctors then cleared him to play any sport, but now that this crime has occurred, he cannot play any sport. He can only do low impact exercise. My youngest son's anxiety increased to the point that his grades have been affected. His grades have dropped.

Also because of this, we have lost, and continue to lose, a lot of time and money. As you already know, (insert name) spent two months in the hospital and four months hospitalized at home. When he was in the hospital, I went to see him every day and then returned home, since they would not let me stay due to the pandemic. If he got very sick or anxious, they let me stay, which made me spend a lot of money. Parking was \$20 a day and I had to put gas in 3-4 times a week. There were times when I was just getting home and they would call me from the hospital and ask that I return to the hospital, even very early in the morning. Before, gasoline lasted me two weeks. Now, only one week. I still pay for parking when I take my son to his appointments. I also spend money on things that I use for him such as vitamins, wet wipes, bed protectors, and more. I missed work days and still miss work because of his appointments or court day as today.

After (insert name) came home, we had therapists and nurses come to our house for about four months. (insert name) left the hospital with an open stomach wound and needed medical assistance with the vacuum wound, bandaging, colostomy bag change, Speech, physical, and OT therapy. This was all performed in the house. Speech therapy was performed because his vocal cords were damaged since he was intubated many times. So they were paralyzed and it was hard for him to talk. His voice is not the same, and never will be. Because of that, he was unable to eat when he was in the hospital, so the doctor placed a tube from his nose to his stomach to feed him and give him water. He sometimes cried because he wanted to eat solid food and drink water, but he couldn't. The doctors told us that he could

get pneumonia and he could die. I felt bad when he asked me for water while crying. I told him that I couldn't give him any because it was dangerous for him.

It was also very frustrating for (insert name) to have the wound vacuum attached to his body. He said that it doesn't feel good to have to carry it with him because he can't even take a shower. He had to sleep with it and we had to make sure it was charged. He also used a walker for a while, as he had a hard time walking. For almost two months, he was unable to eat or drink water by mouth.

I had to learn how to take care of and clean (insert name) wounds. The last day my son was in the hospital, one of the registered nurses taught me how to change the dressing, since there was no nurse in place to come to the house. So the first few weeks I did the bandage change for my son, it was difficult for me to do it because it was a big and deep wound. I was afraid of hurting him or not doing it right, or that the wound would get infected. I also learned how to change his colostomy bag. At first, it took me about an hour and sometimes I had to change the colostomy bag up to 3 times a day. But, over time, I learned some tricks to prevent the bag from opening, and over time I got better. I used to get very frustrated. We still have some incidents with the colostomy bag, but not as often as before. Sometimes at 3 or 4 in the morning, I would have to get up to clean everything and put a new bag on it. It has been very exhausting all this time. It is not easy to take care of a person with medical problems, but I do it with great pleasure because it is my son.

(insert name) also had many medical appointments after coming home. He still has now, but not as many as he used to. He is still receiving physical therapy. His doctor said at the last appointment that his legs are still weak. This causes us to spend time and money on gas and sometimes money to buy food when medical appointments take a long time. Because this crime brought a lot of stress and anxiety to my children, I ended up signing them up for classes to help them cope with the trauma that this crime caused them. (insert name) is in a guitar class and my youngest is in soccer, which implies more economic expenses, not only for classes, but also to buy the things they need for classes, along with gas money and time consuming. I believe time is one of the things that we are never going to get back. (insert name) attackers stole that from us. Time is very expensive and you can never get it back.

This is something that I would not wish on anyone, not even to my son's attackers. It has been one of the worst nightmares in my life. To have to go through the pain of almost losing a child. No parent should go through this. Even though he is getting better, the truth is I don't know what his future will be. The only thing I know is that he still has a long way to go and his future is uncertain. As a result of all this, he has PTSD and I don't know if he will ever recover, or be the same as he was before the tragedy.

I ask you to please take into account all the consequences and the suffering that we as the victims and families of the victims have gone through, and continue to go through just because these young kids made a bad decision. I believe right now that the defendant is a danger to our community. He knew what he was doing from the first moment they acquired his weapon. I ask you to please not forget who the victims are here because he is not. He deserves to be punished after terrifying the people who were in the store, and for making us live in a deep pain. They don't deserve mercy, since they had no mercy for my son (insert name) and the rest of the victims and the people who were at (insert name) on (insert date). Thank you!