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BABY CHANCE WALSH

With deal, mother gets 25 years

Grandparents condemn woman over infant's death

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SARASOTA — Just moments after Kristen Bury was sentenced to 25 years of prison for the death of her infant son Chance Walsh, a woman took the stand to chastise her.

It was her mother.

“She lacks the most basic instinct that defines us as human beings, a mother’s instinct to love and protect her young at all costs,” Sally Susino said of Bury, 32.

The comments left Bury sobbing and unable to stand inside the Sarasota County courtroom. Her face was concealed by her shackled hands.

Bury gained national notoriety after her 8-week-old son was reported missing in September. In October, Bury directed detectives to a gravesite in a remote area of eastern North Port, about 13 miles from the home she shared with her husband, Joseph Walsh, in Warm Mineral Springs.

On Wednesday morning Bury pleaded no contest to aggravated manslaughter of a child by culpable negligence. She had faced a maximum sentence of 30 years.

Bury will face no additional charges if she abides to conditions of her plea deal, but could face additional charges if she violates those conditions.

Susino advocated a harsher sentence for Bury.

“We feel this is a travesty of justice if the system deems it acceptable to place so little punishment for the value of a human life taken away,” she said. “If this is the precedent we are setting for our future, we are doomed.”

As part of her plea deal, Bury must testify truthfully against Joseph Walsh, Chance's father. Walsh, 37, is charged with second-degree murder, punishable with a maximum life sentence.

Prosecutor Suzanne O'Donnell said the state aimed to prove that Walsh began beating Chance on the evening of Sept. 15 and continued into early the next morning. He allegedly struck and choked the child.

The state also plans to prove that Walsh forced a diaper wipe down the baby's throat, O'Donnell said.

While Bury did nothing to prevent Walsh from abusing their child, O'Donnell said there was no evidence that Bury “laid any hands on Chance.”

Nonetheless, Susino placed direct blame on her daughter, as well as Walsh, for Chance's death.

“By her actions, she made a conscious choice that day to let my defenseless, tiny grandson Chance die a horrible death,” Susino said. “She helped bury him amongst garbage in the shallow grave of a homeless camp, with nothing more than a diaper, as if his life had no value.”

Susino said she taught Bury “right from wrong” growing up, but accused her daughter of repeatedly lying, stealing and manipulating others for her own benefit.

Susino said Bury gave her first child up for adoption to a complete stranger, instead of family, in exchange for a car.

“Once (Bury) became an adult, she began making a series of bad choices and blaming it on everyone but herself, never caring or accepting the consequences,” Susino said. “An entire network of family and friends repeatedly tried to help her. Each time she would turn on them. She never really made a contribution to society.”

Chance’s other maternal grandparent, 50-year-old John Murawski, called Bury a “monster.” He said that Chance, as well as his parents, slipped through society’s cracks.

“Obviously the system is broke, and some laws must change,” he said. “Grandparents should have rights.”

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