

MEDICALLY VULNERABLE

In 2019, Joe Coleman — a father to six children, a decorated Vietnam veteran and a former IPP client — died in an Illinois prison after succumbing to a battle with terminal cancer. He died alone, stripped of his dignity, while serving a life sentence for stealing \$640 from a gas station. In Joe's honor, and for the many people similarly situated across the state, the Illinois Prison Project wrote the Joe Coleman Medical Release Act with national and local stakeholders.

The measure, which allows incarcerated people with terminal illness or disabilities to end their sentences and return to their families, passed both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly with bipartisan support. The law took effect on Jan. 1, 2022 and IPP now represents people who qualify for release under this policy.

DAVID F.

In 2001, David F. began complaining of headaches, blurred vision, balance problems and memory loss. Though a doctor suggested the symptoms were indicative of a brain tumor, David received only ibuprofen and vitamins for more than a year.

When he finally received an MRI in 2003, the scan confirmed the doctor's suspicions. By the time surgeons removed the lump from his brain, the usually slow-growing tumor had swelled to the size of an apple. But even with his tumor now gone, the trauma didn't end there. Complications from the initial surgery required two additional operations.

Later in 2003, David was again admitted to the hospital with swelling and signs of infection around his brain. After yet another surgery, doctors found two cotton balls that had been left inside his brain cavity. The negligent care left him with irreversible health complications. He continues to have difficulty walking, standing, seeing, speaking and eating.

David's experience, while infuriating, is not rare. Illinois prisons are rampant with neglect and wholly unequipped to provide adequate medical care to the thousands of people who desperately need it.

