

# OPINION

## Robert Crimo Jr.'s guilty plea should be a wake-up call for parents

By Jeffery M. Leving

Robert Crimo Jr.'s guilty plea to reckless conduct for helping his son obtain authorization to own firearms three years before Robert Crimo III allegedly opened fire on Highland Park parade-goers should be a wake-up call to everyone: If you hear or see things about potential violence, you must alert the authorities. And if you do things that could potentially enable it, you will face legal consequences.

Crimo Jr. agreed earlier this month to plead guilty and was sentenced to 60 days in jail and two years on probation. He also will have to complete 100 hours of community service.

Prosecutors alleged that Crimo Jr. ignored signs that his son was a danger to himself and others yet signed for him to obtain a fire-arm owner's identification card, which is required to buy guns. Just months before the state permit was issued in 2019, a family member contacted the authorities and said Crimo III had threatened to "kill everyone." Police removed 16 knives, a dagger and a sword from the home in response to that but did not make any arrest.

After that incident, Crimo III bought several guns, including a high-powered rifle that prosecutors say he used in a mass shooting during Highland Park's July Fourth parade in 2022, killing seven and wounding dozens more.

While prosecutions against family members of mass shooting suspects are rare, the case against Crimo Jr. is not exactly an outlier. James and Jennifer Crumbley,



Robert Crimo Jr. arrives on Nov. 6 at the Lake County Courthouse in Waukegan. He pleaded guilty to seven misdemeanors in a case that centered on how his son obtained a gun license. **NAM Y. HUH/AP**

the parents of a school shooter in Oxford Township, Michigan, are awaiting trial for their alleged roles in the slayings of four students by their son in 2021. The Crumbleys are facing involuntary manslaughter charges that they have fought and failed to get dismissed. Their final appeal was to the Michigan Supreme Court, which decided in October not to hear their case. If convicted, each parent faces up to 15 years in prison.

pleaded guilty last year to killing his classmates at Oxford High School. His parents are accused of ignoring their troubled son, who was just 15 years old, and instead of getting him help, they allegedly bought him a gun as an early Christmas present in 2021, just days before he went on a shooting spree.

Obviously, the Crumbleys have the presumption of innocence for now, but the fact that they face trial is a good sign and should put parents everywhere on notice.

Accountability is an important safety net for all communities.

Parents should make sure they do not enable things like this and have to speak up. Notably, even people speaking up about seeing or hearing something alarming it is not guaranteed to stop a determined shooter.

After a 40-year-old man, Robert Card, killed 18 people and wounded 13 others during a shooting spree at two locations in Lewiston, Maine, last month, it was reported that authorities were

told of warning signs but may have dropped the ball.

According to reports, in the months before the Oct. 25 shootings, Card told friends or relatives that he was hearing voices and planning violence and that he demonstrated alarming behavior. Family members and colleagues in his Army Reserve unit did the right thing and alerted the authorities, including the Sagadahoc County sheriff's office and the Army, but not enough was done.

That case is still under investigation, and if the courts determine some people should be held accountable, I hope it will serve as another wake-up call. At the very least, it sounds as though different agencies need to communicate more effectively with each other so that another high-risk person doesn't slip through the cracks.

For parents, friends and colleagues, the simple mandate still applies, perhaps now more than ever: If you hear or see something, say something. And if agencies receive reports from someone's parents, friends or colleagues of a potential threat, they should follow through to ensure potential shooters are not overlooked. Too many lives depend on it.

*Attorney Jeffery M. Leving has dedicated his career to safeguarding children and reuniting them with their fathers. He has written three acclaimed books: "Fathers' Rights," "Divorce Wars" and "How to be a Good Divorced Dad." He also is a recipient of a 2023 Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award presented by President Joe Biden.*

Their son, Ethan Crumbley,