

# Mother files suit over son's death in jail

She alleges she told police  
that he would be suicidal

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A \$10 million lawsuit filed in Baltimore Circuit Court alleges that city and state officials were negligent in the suicide in 2000 of a detainee at the Central Booking and Intake Center.

Robert W. Clementson, 27, a heroin addict and father of two, was arrested after his mother reported to police that he stole thousands of dollars of jewelry from her Carroll County home, according to the suit.

His mother, Lois Kunkoski, also told police that her son would be suicidal if arrested, the suit alleges. Clementson was arrested, sent to the city jail and hanged himself in his cell within 24 hours.

"She tried tough love, and it backfired," said Darcy Massof, one of the lawyers representing Kunkoski. "She's devastated, and she can't get any closure. She really wants to press the lawsuit to make sure this doesn't happen to other kids. She feels terribly guilty."

The suit, filed this month, alleges that during a six-month period in 2000, five suicides occurred at the city jail. Seven detainees committed suicide in 2000, said Mark Vernarelli, spokesman for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.

Most years, including this year, one suicide occurs at the jail, he said. Vernarelli declined to comment on the suit, but said, "The health and safety of pretrial detainees and inmates is always a priority."