

Dear Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is David Sunshine, and I reside in Lyme, CT. I am the Treasurer of Survivors Of Homicide, Inc. I am writing in support of Raised Bill 5799, an Act Concerning Crime Victims and The Victim Advocate.

The State of Connecticut's Independent Victim Advocate should be provided with all resources necessary and appropriate to allow him to properly serve and protect the rights of crime victims. Subpoena power will enable the VA to gather information and conduct investigations necessary to protect the rights of victims. Other State agencies have this power, and it is right and proper for the VA to have it as well.

The states Victim Advocate should also be authorized to file appeals on behalf of crime victims who believe that their rights have been violated or neglected. This authority will increase the role of "Advocate" for the position of Victim's Advocate, while alleviating the feeling of victimization and hopelessness survivors routinely experience.

In the case of harassment crimes, stalking crimes, and crimes involving domestic violence, the court has the ability to issue an order of protection on behalf of victims. All victims should be able to obtain an order of protection where warranted based on the particular facts of their cases. A protective order will, when appropriate, allow victims to participate in the judicial process without fear of retribution from the families or friends of offenders. Judges should have the compassionate authority to issue protective orders when warranted or necessary to protect a crime victim, in all cases involving the use, or attempted use or threatened use of physical violence, even where there is no relationship or never was a relationship between the defendant and the victim.

The Office of the Victim Advocate should be allowed access to the criminal record of youthful offender's records, just as the court based victim advocates do.

To protect and safeguard crime victims, information disclosed by crime victims should not be available to suspects of violent crime or their council. Making this information confidential will serve to reduce fear and intimidation. Victim's personal information must be kept out of the hands of both the accused as well as defense council to prevent any further victimization and for the safety of the crime victim.

The statewide automated notification system proposed in the bill will enable the system to notify victims in a more expeditious and frequent manner on events such as parole proceedings, filed appeals and especially escapes.

It is right and proper to increase the power and authority of the imperative office of the independent victim's advocate. I request that you pass this bill as written.

Thank you for you time and consideration.

David Sunshine
Lyme, Connecticut