

February 28, 2007

Good afternoon Senator McDonald, Representative Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Joe Belliveau and I am in support of Raised Bill No. 7235, An Act Concerning Crime Victims and the Authority of the Victim Advocate.

Crime victims in Connecticut need to have more rights to protect them. In many cases they are being re-victimized by the system and we need to address these issues. For example, when a defendant applies for accelerated rehabilitation, he is required to notify his/her victim. It must be terrifying to the victim to know that the offender has their private information in order to contact them. Most, if not all, would feel very threatened by this. The confidentiality of the victim should be protected at all cost. This Bill proposes to correct this.

Also, it seems that criminals are well aware of their rights under the justice system, while the victims are usually not very informed as to what services are available to them. Victims' needs are just as important as the defendants'. The creation of a "Crime Victim Assistance Center" at each court site is crucial to protecting victim's rights. In addition, giving more power and authority to the State Victim Advocate would help to ensure that the victim's best interests are being addressed. I believe that Raised Bill No. 7235 is a move in the right direction and urge you to support it.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of this Bill.



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