



MADD

Activism | Victim Services | Education®

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Testimony of Michelle Lettieri

Before the Judiciary Committee

On House Bill No. 5032

**“An Act Concerning Operation of a Vessel While Under the Influence of
Intoxicating Liquor or Drugs”**

March 3, 2008

Thank you Co-Chairman Senator Andrew McDonald, Co-Chairman Michael Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony to you today in support of House Bill 5032. I am Michelle Lettieri, Victim Advocate for Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Connecticut.

The impact of operating boat/vessel while intoxicated is felt throughout the state in the loss of innocent lives, the grief expressed by surviving family members and friends and the rise in high risk behaviors.

All too often the toll is listed as statistics. In 1993 my mother Julia “Nana” Coppola was killed by a drunk driver. I was told that she died instantly. This was 15 years ago, and I can still feel the emptiness in my heart. My life has truly been changed forever. To MADD, even one more death is unacceptable. As a Victim Advocate, I have been contacted by families who have been affected by drinking and boating. Most recently I have been in contact with the families of a boating crash on the Connecticut River in Old Saybrook. This crash resulted in three critical injuries and a fatality.

It is time to strengthen, reform and intensify Connecticut’s criminal DUI enforcement and sanctions by extending the charge of Manslaughter to cover boating crashes caused by those under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This charge should be considered a Class C felony.

On behalf of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Connecticut, I respectfully request the Judiciary Committee to support House Bill No. 5032.

Thank you.