



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE
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**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the General Law Committee
Thursday, February 26, 2009**

Good morning Senator Colapietro, Representative Shapiro and distinguished members of the General Law Committee. For the record, my name is Michelle Cruz and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of:

Raised House Bill No. 6519, *An Act Concerning Pawnbrokers, Precious Metal and Stone Dealers and the Recovery of Stolen Jewelry and Precious Metals and Stones*

Imagine for a moment, that you've had the bad fortune of becoming a victim of a burglary or larceny at your home and among the items stolen are your great-grandmother's engagement ring, rare coins left to you by your grandfather, and your child's engraved silver rattle. The unfortunate reality is that the chances of your precious memorabilia being returned to you are not very good. These types of items are often stolen by thieves with an addiction to drugs or alcohol. They are very quickly sold off to a pawnbroker, or alike, and resold without delay.

Many victims of robbery and larceny crimes have complained to the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) regarding this very issue. In addition to the initial violation of the burglary or larceny, crime victims find themselves at a loss of hope to recover their precious belongings. Further, crime victims have a constitutional right to receive restitution from the offender for property loss or damage. The difficulty with that is typically the unrecovered items are not documented with a receipt or appraisal and the personal value and emotional attachment are not compensable.

Raised House Bill No. 6519 will provide for a photographic record of items purchased by pawnbrokers, and others, as well as a stay to resell items of forty-five days. This requirement will not only assist law enforcement during the investigation and apprehension of stolen property but will also provide crime victims with some small measure of hope of recovering their family heirlooms.

I strongly urge the Committee to support this important measure on behalf of victims of crime. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate