



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE
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**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Public Safety and Security Committee
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Good morning Senator Stillman, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security 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. 6563, An Act Concerning the Investigation of Missing Persons Reports

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) has heard from many crime victims regarding the issue of the reporting and investigation of missing persons. The OVA assisted with the issuance of reward monies authorized by the Governor in the missing person case of Billy Smolinski from Waterbury, CT. However, much more needs to be done to address the lack of resources available to family and friends of those who are missing.

There are 150,000 missing and 60,000 unidentified deceased in our country. This is not a problem unique to Connecticut. One would think that as technology advances and the use of DNA databases are expanded, the number of missing persons and unidentified deceased persons should decrease. However, without a model policy for the acceptance and investigation of missing persons, Connecticut will fall behind the national effort to address this issue.

Much like victims of identity theft prior to significant improvements in the laws, those who attempt to report a person missing are often challenged by social stereotypes and attitudes. Raised House Bill No. 6563 will establish a model policy for the acceptance and investigation of missing person reports by law enforcement agencies. The first twenty-four to forty-eight hours are the most important not only for reporting a person missing, but for the collection of potential evidence and notification to the community.

I strongly urge the committee to support this important proposal. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate