

Good morning Senator Calapietro, Representative Shapiro and the other esteemed members of the General Law Committee. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak with you today regarding raised bill #6519 regarding Pawnbrokers and Precious Metals and Stones Dealers.

My name is Douglas Frink and my wife Maureen and I were the victims of a theft from our home in Farmington. Several items of jewelry (including my wife's engagement ring) were stolen from our home and sold to a Precious Metals and Stones Dealer in West Hartford. West Hartford has a town ordinance which provides a 10 day retention period for purchases made at such establishments. Fortunately for that ordinance, we were able to recover my wife's jewelry and her engagement ring within that 10 day period. However, the dealer involved in our case substituted an inferior quality diamond with our ring and sent our diamond to California in violation of this ordinance. Once we finally received our ring back, the dealer who was found to be in violation of the town ordinance was fined \$90.00 despite their obvious attempt to circumvent the system. This \$90.00 fine was merely "the cost of doing business" for this dealer.

Additionally, once the fraud that this dealer had perpetrated was rectified, the dealer still wouldn't admit any wrong doing in our case. This dealer continued to try to justify and rationalize their attempt to buy stolen goods and sell them at an amazing profit while purposefully violating a town ordinance.

In speaking with detectives, we learned that most people are not as fortunate as we had been. Many people go on vacation for 1-2 weeks and discover a burglary after their return. By the time the burglary is reported to Police and the Police search the volumes of reports from these establishments, the property has already been transferred and/or destroyed. The detectives we spoke with felt that a statewide retention period would give them a legitimate opportunity to recover stolen items. Most towns don't have town ordinances covering these dealers and the towns with ordinances have retention periods that are too short. The proposed statewide retention period would give victims throughout the state the hope of recovering their stolen property. We feel that with Connecticut General Statute 21-100 already in place, this proposed amendment to the statute could save people the fate that we were lucky enough to avoid, but that most others aren't able to avoid.

You may hear testimony in opposition of this proposal which describes a financial hardship for these dealers to maintain compliance with the proposal. As a frame of reference, we would like to inform you that we had over \$12,000.00 worth of jewelry stolen from us. The dealer that our property was sold to gave the thieves \$1,635.00 or mere pennies on the dollar for our property. For every fortunate person like us, there are numerous people who don't get their property back. These dealers then sell the property at fair market value and make a huge profit. An alleged financial hardship for these dealers shouldn't be a reason to defeat this bill. Further, the thief who sold our jewelry on two separate occasions to this same dealer was well-known to the dealer he sold it to. This thief had sold several other people's stolen jewelry to this same dealer in the weeks leading up to our incident. The dealer had to have known that the items were stolen, but still bought these items from the thief knowing that they stood to turn a huge profit.

It would be easy for my wife and I to be thankful for our good fortune in recovering our property and move on, but that is not our character. For the most part, items that are sold to Precious Metals and Stones dealers are going to be jewelry with high monetary value and even higher sentimental value. The fact that there is no current statutory retention period for such items amazed us. Precious Metals and Stones dealers have no statutory requirement to retain their purchases and must only adhere to local ordinances (where applicable) which have a minor impact on their business.

It is encouraging to learn that our State Legislature is willing to move to close loopholes in laws that allow businesses to exploit victims. This proposed bill would be a step in the right direction in reducing the pain and suffering that a theft victim must deal with. When dealing with jewelry, many items have high monetary value but significantly higher sentimental value to owners. Though the jewelry might be covered by insurance, no amount of money could ever replace an engagement ring, wedding band or any other family heirloom. We are hopeful that you share our concern and make this matter your priority. Thank you for your time and energy in supporting raised bill #6519.

  
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