

5445

*Raised Bill No. 5445*

*An Act Concerning The Death Penalty*

*Testimony of Kimberly Sundquist; Group Facilitator and former President of Survivors of Homicide*

Representative Lawlor, Senator McDonald and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee; my name is Kimberly Sundquist and I would like to testify in regard to Raised Bill 5445, An Act Concerning the Death Penalty.

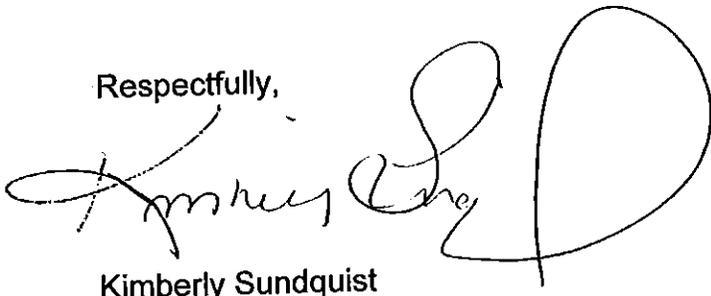
For the record I am a current member and group facilitator as well as the former President for Survivors of Homicide, Inc. This issue is very close to my heart and I hope you take my position seriously as someone who lost her beloved uncle to senseless violence. As you know, Survivors of Homicide as a whole does not take a position on the death penalty. I am here to speak about my own feelings on the matter and my testimony in no way reflects the views of the organization pertaining to this matter.

Personally, I feel as though defense strategies in high profile cases involves finding ways to delay the inevitable while it makes a mockery of the entire criminal justice procedure. In the case of the monster who invaded the home of Dr Petit and his family, the games the defense attorney plays is extremely inappropriate. The inmate in question attempted suicide and then claimed his living conditions are so poor with constant supervision, bright lights and the denial of important medication therefore the jury selection should not continue. Thankfully, the judge in that case found no merit in his claims and allowed jury selection to continue. Stunts like this will only re-victimize Dr. Petit and his family which is cruel.

I support any legislation that will limit the amount and cause for appeals and habeas corpus. Every time a habeas is filed, the victim finds themselves going back in time and are unable to move forward. I understand there are reasons appeals should be granted, but the abuse of filing countless appeals halts the victim's growth and healing. When I watch my son do something wrong and there is no question as to if he did it, I put him in time out. I do not allow him to argue the fact with me. I do not let him tell me why I am wrong for putting him in time out. If I did, he would not have learned that his actions were inappropriate and he would never be sorry for bad behavior. Time after time, I see how many rights inmates have over law abiding citizens and it infuriates me. When someone is convicted of a crime they are supposed to lose their freedom and their rights. At least that is what I learned in high school. Thus far, I have seen them get more rights than their victims can even come close to seeing. As for the language regarding filing a habeas in cases of discrimination, I would like to ask how one can determine the mindset of a jury of the inmate's peers or a judge who put him there. In today's age, it seems everyone tries to make excuses and blame others for their bad decisions. If a jury or judge sentences a person to life in prison or death by lethal injection, the court should uphold their decision unless there is new evidence to clear the individual. Not to do so would further make a mockery of the entire process and let jurors and the former judge know that the time they put into the first trial did not matter. I do, however, support the language that will require the victims in the case to be heard with their opinion. I do not see how we can provide incentive to stay within the guidelines of the law when prisoners have more rights than the general population.

In regard to the death penalty itself, because of the magnitude of the consequence, I do understand more caution needs to be taken. In the case of the Petit Home invasion, there is no question as to if these alleged killers did it. There is physical evidence, an eye witness, and the pair was caught leaving the house. One of the suspects even spoke to an author detailing the crime. There is no reason to delay these proceedings and find a hasty resolution for the sake of the lone survivor in that case. I cannot understand why the offenders have all the power. It simply is not fair. Basically, if things are not done to limit the amount of muscle these defense attorneys are allowed to senselessly flex just to delay the inevitable, and if Connecticut refuses to see this imbalance of justice, I see no reason to even keep the death penalty on the books. The death penalty does not work because we don't let it. I personally support keeping the death penalty as an option in the most vicious cases. The Petit Home Invasion would certainly fall into that category. My problem with it, is that the way Connecticut handles death penalty cases, this man will never see the death chamber and Dr. Petit will be re-victimized over and over again until the offender or Dr. Petit himself dies from natural causes. Please help the victims by reforming the death penalty to make it more effective and a way to obtain justice rather than making it near impossible to obtain a sentence of death and give offenders more rights than they already have. Let the law work for us instead of against us. Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Sundquist', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly Sundquist