

Elizabeth Brancato
19 Smith St.
Torrington, CT 06790

Testimony in support of SB 1035 and HB 6425

My name is Elizabeth Brancato and my mother Barbara McKitis was murdered over thirty years ago; May 9, 1979, to be exact.

My mother was 53 years old when she died. She was brutally beaten, raped, and bludgeoned to death, in her home. Her death was horrible, and it was a horrible loss for those of us who loved her. Death is difficult enough to deal with, but death accompanied by this brutality is a whole different thing. This kind of death leaves behind living victims.

Today, I'd like to talk to you briefly, about how the criminal justice system, in general, and the death penalty specifically, further victimize the families of murder victims.

I experienced the nightmare of being trapped in a criminal justice process. For five years my family and I endured the trial and appeal process of my mother's killer. Throughout this period, I was completely unable to deal with the huge emotions that were flooding over me. The pain, loss, and confusion that I experienced in the wake of my mother's murder were too big to handle while I also had to navigate the legal system. The trial demanded all my attention, and not knowing what was coming next, or when it was coming made it impossible to try to take the time to grieve and heal. My healing was put on hold. The uncertainty of when it would be over made it necessary to postpone attending to my grief, my pain, my anger, and all the other emotions that such a brutal loss creates.

Only after the trial was over could I begin to process my emotions and take care of myself, and my children. My children were 8 and 11 years old when they lost their grandmother. Although I tried to be there for them, and I worked hard to help them through their grief and fear, I know now that I wasn't fully present for them in this. I couldn't be.

A letter signed by over 75 Connecticut murder victims' families states: "*The reality of the death penalty is that it drags out the legal process for decades. In Connecticut, the death penalty is a false promise that goes unfulfilled, leaving victims' families frustrated and angry after years of fighting the legal system.*" I would add that I believe it further victimizes the loved ones of murder victims.

I find it tremendously disturbing that in the name of helping victims, we, the citizens of Connecticut, continue with the death penalty system that does so much damage to victims' families. I believe that if we are serious about caring for victims, we will repeal the death penalty right away. I urge you to vote to abolish the death penalty, and our governor to sign the bill into Connecticut law.