



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE  
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**Testimony of Michelle Cruz, Esq., State Victim Advocate  
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee  
Monday, April 4, 2011**

Good morning Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary 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 concerning:

**Raised Senate Bill No. 960, *An Act Exempting Immediate Family Members of Murder and Manslaughter Victims from the Jury Summoning Process in Criminal Actions*  
(Proposed amendment)**

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) supports the effort to reduce the trauma experienced by the immediate surviving family members of a victim of homicide. In cases where an arrest has been made, surviving family members are often exposed to long delays in the prosecution phase of the criminal justice process as well as the post conviction activities associated with a conviction. Those called for jury service while awaiting the criminal trial of an individual charged with killing a loved one may very well feel too overwhelmed to perform as a juror. Similarly, the process of going to a courthouse or sitting in a courtroom, may, for some surviving family members of a victim of homicide, cause unnecessary trauma or revictimization. The decision can only be made by that surviving family member.

Raised Senate Bill No. 960 provides for the surviving family member of a homicide victim to request to be excluded from the summoning process in criminal actions. Further, should the surviving family member reconsider this decision, the surviving family member may rescind this request at any time with written notification to the Jury Administrator.

The OVA respectfully requests that the Committee consider adding the following language: "Upon receipt of a request from a surviving family member of a homicide victim to be excluded from the summoning process, the Jury Administrator shall send, via certified mail, confirmation of such request and contact information for the Jury Administrator for future requests, if any". This will ensure that a surviving family member is informed of their decision and provided with the contact information of the Jury Administrator should they choose to rescind their request at a later date.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.  
State Victim Advocate