

House Bill: 6113
AN ACT CONCERNING THE INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSON
REPORTS
Testimony of Kimberly Sundquist

Representative Dargan, Senator Hartley and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security Committee, my name is Kimberly Sundquist and I would like to offer my written testimony in support of HB 6113: An Act Concerning the Investigation of Missing Person reports.

I am the former president and board member of Survivors of Homicide (SOH). I still currently facilitate a support group in Manchester. I have met so many victims of one of the most traumatic crimes one can face and my heart goes out to all of them seeing as though my own uncle was murdered on September 11, 2003 outside his business. The act of his murder was traumatic enough and the lack of justice in our case was further trauma I would have rather avoided...but I got to bury my uncle because he was never missing. I was able to see him at peace before he was cremated. I was able to say goodbye. I was able to leave a poem that I wrote for him and read at his funeral that would be buried with him. I hated seeing him in that casket, but it beats not knowing where he was and thinking that he just fell off the face of the earth.

Imagine that your own child, parent or spouse was not only murdered, but also missing. We all know that the first 24 hours in any missing persons case is the most crucial. Yes sometimes people run away on their own accord, but in so many cases, foul play is suspected and later verified. 24 hours may not seem like a long time to you to wait for a person who may have run away to materialize, but for the parent of Billy Smolinski, whose son was murdered and has been missing for years, and who knew things did not add up in his disappearance, every second was an eternity. 24 hours also offers entirely too much time for offenders to get stories straight, clean up evidence and find alibis. In the case of Billy Smolinski, they had to wait even longer than the 24 hours because his neighbor claimed Billy was going out of town for a couple days. His truck was in the driveway in a way he would not have parked it and the events that took place earlier that day were out of character for him. This case should have been taken seriously from the moment the police were called and they gathered information. If it had been, Billy's remains may have been found by now and the offender(s) arrested.

It is unacceptable that victims of foul play are not always taken seriously, even with much information leading to a conclusion that a crime had taken place. I understand that the police are busy, but that is no excuse not to follow up with something where it was very obvious that Billy was not only missing, but also quite possibly murdered. Evidence was not processed in a timely manner and tips were not exposed to the family until the family themselves hired a private detective. There is no reason that the family should have had to hire someone to find out what was either not investigated or what was known by the police for years yet not disclosed. The treatment the Smolinskis faced by the law enforcement was inexcusable and it quite possibly allowed someone or some people to literally get away with murder.

It is so important that law enforcement not only take reports of missing persons seriously, but begin the investigation. Evidence should be processed in a timely fashion, DNA taken so if a John Doe is ever found they can swiftly identify the remains, and the families should be treated with respect. Law Enforcement personnel may have heard sob stories over and over again, but each victim is new to the ordeal and they need to be treated as such. They are traumatized, they want answers, and they want to know what to do. They don't want to go home without their loved ones. Their hearts are broken. They think of the "What ifs". They want to remember the last conversation with their loved one and they often try and remember if the last thing they said when they hung up the phone was "I love you". It is horrible. I urge you to make changes in the current policies to waive the 24 hour waiting period to accept reports of a missing person; to support the processing of all evidence in a timely fashion including DNA, and support the training of all law enforcement who will be working on these types of cases so that they will handle it correctly and treat the victims with respect.

I thank you for your time and consideration in this matter and I urge you to pass HB 6113.

Kimberly Sundquist