



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE  
505 HUDSON STREET, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106

Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.  
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Michelle Cruz, State Victim Advocate  
Public Safety and Security Committee  
Tuesday, February 15, 2011

Good morning Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and distinguished members of the Public Safety and Security 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:

**Proposed House Bill No. 6113, An Act Concerning the Investigation of Missing Person Reports (SUPPORT)**

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) has heard from many crime victims regarding the issue of the reporting and investigation of missing persons. As I am sure many of you are aware, Janice Smolinski, of Cheshire, has been an extraordinary advocate for improving the reporting and investigation procedures of missing persons. Her devotion to this cause is fueled by Janice's son, Billy, suspicious disappearance in 2004 and the systemic challenges she faced in trying to assist law enforcement search for her son. Janice has also brought this issue to the national stage with the support and assistance of Congressman Chris Murphy.

There are 150,000 missing and 60,000 unidentified deceased in our country. This is not a problem unique to Connecticut. One would think that as technology advances and the use of DNA databases are expanded, the number of missing persons and unidentified deceased persons should decrease. However, without a model policy for the acceptance and investigation of missing persons, Connecticut will fall behind the national effort to address this issue.

Although we have made some improvements in the laws, those who attempt to report a person missing are still often challenged by social stereotypes and attitudes. Proposed House Bill No. 6113 will establish a model policy for the acceptance and investigation of missing person reports by law enforcement agencies. The first twenty-four to forty-eight hours are the most important not only for reporting a person missing, but for the collection of potential evidence and notification to the community. I strongly urge the committee to support this important proposal.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Very Sincerely,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.  
State Victim Advocate