



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

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

Michelle S. Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Michelle Cruz, Esq., 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:

Senate Bill No. 765, *An Act Concerning Emergency Alerts for Abducted or Missing Children*

The U.S. Department of Justice recommends guidelines for states to consider when adopting Amber Alert program criteria. The guidelines include:

- Reasonable belief by law enforcement that an abduction has occurred;
- The abduction is of a child age 17 or younger;
- There is enough descriptive information about the child for law enforcement to issue the alert to assist in the recovery of the child; and
- The child's name and other critical data elements have been entered into the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database.

Additionally, law enforcement categorizes an Amber Alert case based on the circumstances of the abduction. For example, a family abduction; a non-family abduction; lost, injured or otherwise missing; and an endangered runaway. Law enforcement may determine an Amber Alert be re-categorized based on new information developed during the investigation. The goal of an Amber Alert is to instantly galvanize the entire community to assist in the search for and safe recovery of a missing or abducted child.

Connecticut last issued an Amber Alert on October 5, 2010. The alert was canceled six hours later after the children were found safety. As the proposal is not specific to the nature of the changes, let us keep in mind the important reasons for adopting the Amber Alert System—the public promotion of missing child/children and/or abduction cases to enable the entire community to assist law enforcement in the search for and safe recovery of missing or abducted children.

Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Very Sincerely,

Michelle Cruz, Esq.
State Victim Advocate