

Jane Caron, MSW, murder victim family member
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In Support of SB 280

My name is Jane Caron. I am a life-long resident of Connecticut and am here today to ask for your support of SB 280.

I am a clinical social worker with more than 30 years of professional experience. I am also a niece of a homicide victim. In 1986 my Aunt Dorothy was brutally murdered by a young man seeking money for his cocaine addiction. What started out as robbery, ended with the stabbing of my aunt and leaving her to die. I have a difficult time coming to terms with the fear she must have felt.

In my professional life and my personal experience, I understand how all encompassing grief can be. What I know from my clients and myself is the overwhelming need to seek a place of peace. In the case of a violent death, the need is even greater to find that elusive peace.

The justice system worked well in my Aunt's case. Her murderer pled guilty and was given a life sentence. The quick resolution of the case allowed her family to try to make sense of the senseless and move closer to that place of peace. Justice is ultimately served when the needs of the victim's family members are met.

The fact that fewer than two percent of all murders committed in Connecticut are death penalty cases, adds to the confusion and heartbreak for family members of murder victims. On the one hand, if your loved one's murder is not a capital case, family member might feel that their relative's violent death was not quite violent enough, making for more intense grief. On the other hand, if it does become a capital case and the sentence is death, the family will endure decades of court proceedings while that elusive peace remains a distant possibility. The existence of the death penalty in Connecticut clearly harms those who need and deserve society's care and concern; namely, family members of homicide. I, myself, do not want someone executed on my behalf. What I want is justice in the form of life without parole and support for healing.

My professional organization, National Association of Social Workers, has a policy paper in support of abolishing the death penalty in the United States. In the statement, it is clear that social workers believe that capital punishment goes against their Code of Ethics and what social workers stand for. I believe, both as a social worker and a murder victim's family member, helping me and others like me to heal and find peace will serve the greater good and support justice.

I thank you for listening to me and I implore you to support the passage of SB 280.