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State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Judiciary Committee
Monday, March 31, 2014

Good day Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. For the record, my name is Garvin Ambrose and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

Raised Senate Bill No. 491, *An Act Concerning Harassment of a Victim of Violent Crime or a Relative of a Victim of Violent Crime*

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) **supports** the intent of **Raised Senate Bill No. 491**, however, would like to offer a suggestion that will further improve the proposal and eliminate any unintended confusion.

Harassment is a form of abuse that often lends continued anxiety, fear and embarrassment to the victim. Additionally, if not immediately addressed through swift enforcement and consequences, harassing behavior may continue for extended periods of time and may escalate. This is particularly true in cases of bullying. Social media outlets are misused to harass, humiliate, threaten and torment the victim, while inciting others to join in the harassment. Victims become isolated as they feel there is nowhere to turn or escape.

The OVA understands that the intent of the proposal is to create an enhanced penalty for individuals that, with intent to harass, annoy or alarm a victim of *violent crime*, communicate with the victim, or relative, about the violent crime. The OVA supports the enhanced penalty from a C misdemeanor to an A misdemeanor when the harassing communication is regarding the crime, but believes that this penalty should be extended to all victims, as defined by C.G.S. § 1-1k¹ and all crimes.

To ensure that all victims are afforded this protection, the OVA recommends:

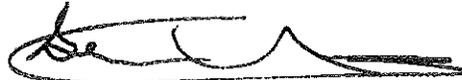
- Strike lines 3 – 7 in their entirety;
- In line 19, strike the words “of violent”

¹ "victim of crime" or "crime victim" means an individual who suffers direct or threatened physical, emotional or financial harm as a result of a crime and includes immediate family members of a minor, incompetent individual or homicide victim and a person designated by a homicide victim in accordance with section 1-56r.

- In line 20, strike the word "violent"
- In line 21, strike the word "violent"

With the OVA's recommended changes, any person arrested and charged with harassing any victim of crime, by means of written, oral or electronic communication regarding the crime, would be exposed to an A misdemeanor rather than a C misdemeanor. I urge the Committee's **support** of Raised Senate Bill No. 491, with the **OVA's proposed changes**.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Garvin G. Ambrose", written over a horizontal line.

Garvin G. Ambrose, Esq.
State Victim Advocate