NATASHA M. PIERRE, ESQ.
State Victim Advocate

Testimony of Natasha M. Pierre, Esq., State Victim Advocate
Submitted to the Labor and Public Employees Committee
Tuesday, February 24, 2015

Good evening Senator Winfield, Representative Tercyak and distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. For the record, my name is Natasha Pierre and I am the Victim Advocate for the State of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning:

> House Bill No. 6244, *An Act Concerning Parents and Guardians of Crime Victims and Unemployment Benefits*

There is a compensation program that is available if a victim of crime experienced physical injury for certain costs associated with the crime committed against them. Such costs may include medical expenses, dental expenses, counseling and lost wages. The compensation program DOES NOT provide financial assistance for any property loss, property damage or pain and suffering. Additionally, the compensation program is limited, up to $15,000 for personal injury, and the program is the payer of last resort.

House Bill No. 6244 would permit the parent or guardian of a child who is a victim of crime to receive unemployment benefits when the parent or guardian must leave a job to take care of the child. Such compensation is necessary because the parent or guardian would not be eligible under the existing compensation program as they themselves have not experienced physical injury and therefore cannot recover lost wages to care for the child/victim.

The legal definition of unemployment benefits is insurance benefits paid by the state or federal government to individuals who are involuntarily out of work in order to provide them with necessities, such as food, clothing and shelter[1]. Although this would exclude parents who voluntarily leave work to care for a loved one, I believe an exception should be made because the parent of a child/victim should not have to choose between the well-being of their child and providing life's necessities due to their child being victimized at no fault of their own.

I urge the Committee's favorable report on House Bill No. 6244. Thank you for consideration of my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

Natasha M. Pierre, Esq.
State Victim Advocate

[1] http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Unemployment+benefit