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February 25, 2016

Dear Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to you in regards to the Raised Bill No. 213, "An act concerning the inheritance rights of a beneficiary or survivor who is found not guilty by reason of mental disease or defect". This bill is very important to me because my family has seen firsthand what can happen because there is no such law in place. My sister Heather Messenger was brutally killed by her husband David Messenger January 3, 1998. I wish that this was the most traumatic thing that could have happened, but I was wrong. We waited three years for the killer to go to trial and could not believe that he was found "Not Guilty by Reason of Mental Disease or Defect." There was never any doubt that Messenger killed his pregnant wife, in front of their five year old son. How could the laws of Connecticut allow the man to be found not guilty? That was one of my first questions.

I remember hearing back about 2001 that our family could not sue Messenger for wrongful death because he was found not guilty. Perhaps this was incorrect information but it was told to my father before he passed away and we never made any attempt to proceed. Never in my wildest dreams did I know that was the beginning of many injustices our family was subjected to. When I learned Messenger hired an attorney that proceeded, on behalf of my deceased sister's estate, to sue the home owner policy for wrongful death I couldn't believe it. Not only that an attorney would be so cold and callous to take such a case when there were surviving members of my sister's family, but that the State of Connecticut had no laws prohibiting this. Imagine the disgust I felt when I learned the estate sued, won and that the beneficiary of my sister's estate was her husband, the murderer himself. We never did learn what became of her life insurance, and any other interests and possessions she had. I come from a "Dower Rights" state and yet learned that Heather had no stake in the Chaplin home, the Maine home on an island or any other property Messenger owned. Presumably, everything she had went to the killer. THIS IS SO WRONG! Heather had a child that should have inherited anything and everything of his mother's estate. She had parents, siblings, in-laws, cousins and other people near and dear to her. Heather probably can't rest in peace knowing her husband not only killed her, but he profited from her death. She would be outraged to know he still is worth millions and actually rewarded himself for his evil crime.

I know of a couple instances that have happened in Connecticut that the insanity plea would have applied to. The Sandy Hook tragedy, if Adam Lanza had not died, he would have inherited his mother's estate. I think everyone believes he had mental disease or a defect. Our family prays no other family will have to endure the heartache we have because there is no law preventing a killer profiting. Wrong is wrong and no killer should ever be allowed to profit. We understand there have been attempts to pass this sort of bill in the past, and they have failed. Please finally pass this bill so I can feel safe knowing no other family would have to go through this kind of travesty. Let my sister rest in peace, do something that will make us feel better about this whole situation.

Thank you for your time and hopefully, your vote to make this happen.

Sincerely,

Hannah Williamson