

*Testimony of Amanda Mendoza
Survivor of Child Sexual Abuse
Constituent of West Hartford
Committee on Judiciary
April 1, 2019*

Support: SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

Good evening Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Amanda Mendoza, and I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

On March 27th of 2018, a detective from the Hartford Police Department informed me that he applied for a warrant to arrest my offender, but that the warrant had been denied. The reason the warrant was denied was because the Hartford PD allowed the statute of limitations to run on my case. With a tinge of guilt in his voice, the detective expressed that he advocated on my behalf at the State's Attorney's Office that the statute of limitations passed at the fault of Hartford PD. To our disappointment, this did not matter.

At 15 years old, I disclosed to my mother that a family member sexually abused me for over half a decade starting at the age of six. Tears streaming down her face, we get in the car and head to Hartford PD. Little did my mother know, that Hartford PD would do very little to pursue the man responsible for raping her daughter.

The detective I was assigned at 15 years old was cold, rude and dismissive. She would almost never answer my mother's phone calls on updates to the case and when she would finally pick up, she would state 'I have other cases before Amanda, and I will eventually get to hers'. Months go by, and this detective sets an interview for my perpetrator at Hartford PD. My mother, interested to know what the next steps were, was told by my detective that '[she] could not confirm [his] identity with the photo they had on file, so [she] could not continue without confirming his identity'. My perpetrator's lawyer made it to the interview; they could have confirmed his identity, but alas, this cycle continued. I learned this year, that this was really just an excuse made by the Detective who was stalling working on my case.

For the next three years, another 3 to 4 interviews would be set and the same excuses arose. Phone call after phone call, my mother was left exhausted, aggravated and broken...and then I turned 18 years old.

The detective told my mother she was no longer able to update her on my case, and that 'it was up to [her] daughter to call now'. After this point, I had never received a phone call from my detective. It seems apparent now that she put the obligation of pursuing the case onto me, the victim.

Up until the Summer of 2017, my mother and I had not heard from the Hartford Police Department since 2013. During that Summer, I gathered all the courage I had to call the Hartford PD after 7 years of no personal contact with my detective. It turned out, my case was still open

with no detective overseeing it. I was assigned a new detective who initially started our meeting saying there was 'no documentation about what happened with [my] case' and that 'all [he] knows is that [my] file was left on his desk'. No one could answer the questions I had about what happened in the last 7 years. How could there be no documentation for incredibly sensitive and important information?

I had to undergo the stress, re-traumatization and pain of retelling my sexual abuse again, and at this point, all hope I had for receiving justice had vanished.

In February of 2018, my new detective submitted an arrest warrant to the Hartford State's Attorney's office. He did not promise that it would be granted due to the statute of limitations for prosecution having passed, but that he would try to pursue it due to my first detective's lack of investigating and not closing out the case. But as we already know, my case was closed due to the statute of limitations in March of 2018...a little over a year ago today.

Since then, I have filed an internal affairs complaint with Hartford PD citing the detective assigned to my case failed to investigate the crime I reported. After conducting an investigation, the Hartford PD issued a decision that my allegations of both neglect of duty and profane language were sustained. My first detective neglected her duty which in turn, ripped away any chance of me receiving justice. She did not find my case to be a priority. She did not find my mother's cries for help to be motivating to investigate further. My case did not "slip through the cracks"; my case was blatantly ignored and passed onto the next detective...a few years too late. My only hope is that there are no other young children or adults abused at the hands of my rapist.

If Connecticut eliminated the statute of limitations, I would have had a chance at seeking justice. Hartford PD admitted they were guilty, and I have not heard back from them on what next steps are to make sure this does not happen again...so I am here.

Please eliminate the criminal statute of limitations for sexual assault offenses against children. This was not my fault. This was not my mother's fault. I reported my case, and I cooperated with the investigation. However, the Hartford PD failed me by not submitting a warrant within the five-year limitation. My mother and I did everything we could, and the criminal justice system failed us.

I urge you to pass SB 3 An Act Combatting Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. There may be other children or adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse who need a chance at receiving justice too.

Thank you,

Amanda Mendoza