

My name is Kara Dewaine. I am here to speak in support of Bill SB 666 AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS FOR CERTAIN MENTAL OR EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENTS AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR CORRECTIONAL STAFF, EMERGENCY MEDICAL STAFF AND DISPATCHERS.

My father, Jeramie Dewaine committed suicide February 25, 2019. He was employed as a correctional officer for the state of CT, at Corrigan Radgowski correctional institution in Montville CT for 13 years. He was an incredible man, husband, father, grandfather and Correctional Officer. He approached his job with great pride, and dignity every single day. His priority was to make not only his facility but the world around him a better place.

My father's career was his livelihood and much like everything else he did, he poured his heart and soul into his job. Through his work countless hours behind prison walls, we as a family watched him slowly lose himself, and the positive, powerful, joyous man he was known to be. As it is not hard to imagine the type of environment that exists behind prison walls, this is not a thought, but rather an everyday reality for Correctional Officers, including my father. He endured incredible hardships during his time as a Correctional Officer. Witnessing humans at their worst every day. Suicides, death, assaults. The constant urgent feeling of having to look over your shoulder, be aware of your surroundings at all time and worry about protecting yourself from danger at any given moment. These things were forever imprinted in his brain.

His job did not end when he left the building, or ended a shift; he carried all of this with him wherever he went. He would leave the facility, put on a brave face and come home to us while attempt to carry on a normal, loving life. But the fact of the matter is that was not a possibility. These harboring emotions are not things that you can chose to turn on and off. The feelings, and experiences he chose to internalize, eventually ended up costing him his life.

On February 25, 2019. My father Jeramie Dewaine left his shift at Corrigan Radgowski Correctional Institution, drove home, placed his cellphone on his bed, took his firearm, and took his own life by gunshot. We, the Dewaine family, were forced to move forward without our father, grandfather, husband, and friend. Had there been resources, or outlets made available to him throughout his career, OUR story may have ended differently. Please consider this bill, in order to make potentially save other families lives. And so that our Correctional Officers do not have to suffer in silence any longer.

I want to thank the Labor Committee for listening to my testimony.