

My name is Melissa Saad and I live in the town of Naugatuck. I want to thank you all for allowing me to submit my testimony today.

On March 24, while my family and I were out, our home in Naugatuck was burglarized. The people who broke into our home stole every piece of jewelry we owned, along with some electronics, totalling \$11,000. These were family heirlooms and items that just cannot be replaced. We only had \$5,000 jewelry coverage and had to pay a \$1,000 deductible. The two people responsible were arrested on other charges a few weeks later, and were then charged with the burglary of my home. Both people have previous felony arrests, both have served time in prison, and one of them has 15 felony arrests. They were also on probation and in violation of that probation when they broke into my home. How could that be?

Fast forward a few weeks. I received a letter in the mail from the Waterbury Superior Court identifying me as a victim. It stated any information in regards to this case would be helpful. So I called, and was told to submit a letter explaining our position, I asked if I would be able to address the court and was told absolutely, it was "MY RIGHT" as a victim. I also asked if sentencing could take place in July, and was told I didn't need to attend, it wasn't on the docket as a disposition and "these things take months to resolve, and to call the day after the court date to be given the new court date" So that is what I did, only to be told he was sentenced, and I was not granted any restitution. "That because he was given jail time, judges usually do not give restitution also"? Needless to say I lost my mind, I started yelling at the clerk "how could this happen?"

I emailed State's Attorney Kevin Kane expressing my displeasure and demanding answers, which was then followed by a phone call from a Barbara Jean Quinn, victim advocate in Waterbury. I had spoken to Ms. Quinn before, only briefly, she explained to me that burglary victims were not allowed to have an advocate, only victims of violent crime were. This phone call was different, I told her what happened and asked for help, I needed answers, how come I have victim rights, if they aren't going to be honored? How could they have sentenced the defendant knowing I had expressed my wish to speak? How could this court completely disregard me? Is this justice? Ms. Quinn did a wonderful job calming me down, but still stated that she couldn't help me. She did however give me the number of the State's Victim Advocate and told me to give them a call.

I did call and I asked for help. My rights as a victim were then explained to me, like they should have been after the crime, I should have known what my rights were well before they were violated. I explained to the OVA that one of the people responsible for the burglary was given a plea deal and was sentenced to only 2 years. This is a persistent offender, someone who can't live by the rules and should have been charged accordingly. He was on probation when he broke into my home, he had served 9 years in prison for an armed robbery does that not mean anything to anyone. Is everyone waiting for someone to get hurt next time? So because I can't have anymore say about the first defendant, I have put my every effort into making sure I am heard in court with the second defendant. This also has not been an easy task. I called Waterbury Court to make sure the court date was still on. I was told to "come to the State Attorneys Office and let them know I was

there" I did that. Only when the judge asked if "the victim was notified, and did they have anything to say" the prosecutor said " yes they were notified but had nothing to say" to which I stood up in court and said "YES I DO HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY" how could that have happened? how could the note have gone missing? why did I have to stand up in court and yell? Something is terribly wrong here, I am a victim, how come I do not feel like it?

Subsequently, the second defendant has been sentenced. Two of her three charges were dropped. I was able to speak, expressing my wishes for jail time and restitution, to which the judge replied "he saw no reason to impose jail time as the co-defendant, the one who physically broke into my home was only given 2 years, and that her part wasn't as big as that. If she remains free she can give me restitution." I beg to differ, conspiracy is just as big, and she was the one who physically sold our things, she was just as guilty. I feel like we have laws but nobody wants to enforce them, I feel that defendants rights are given more weight than victims of crimes. How is it that crime victims have to do so much work, just to be disregarded in the end. Does anyone not feel bad about this? who should be held accountable?

I do not think everyone should go to jail, as all of us are human. People make mistakes sometimes, and I am a firm believer in second chances. I do think that after you have been given a second chance you should behave yourself, if not severe consequences should follow. These repeat offenders think this is a joke, they laugh at probation, they know that they won't spend much time in jail, they know it is too much paper work, and they know they have all the rights. This makes me sick. I believe prosecutors and judges alike, pick and choose who and how to prosecute. They know that repeat offenders know the law. They also know that some cases are easier to prosecute than others. What are we teaching our children of Connecticut?

In closing, I think if we just enforce the laws we have, give out the penalties according to the charges and the law, we will have less crime, people will be afraid to commit crimes in Connecticut.

Also, I think that crime victims and their rights should never be forgotten, that they should ALWAYS be number 1, first and foremost. We should not have to do all this work, we should be treated as a victim of crime, any crime, regardless if it's violent or not. Being a victim of a crime carries a huge burden, you eat, sleep and breathe everything that has been done wrong to you, it starts to consume your life. You are a VICTIM of a crime, and you shouldn't have to be a victim of your own States Judicial system.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Melissa Saad
Naugatuck, CT