

“My name is Naomi Roche and I am a victim advocate in the Rutland County State’s Attorney’s Office, and have been so for 5 years. I support and assist victims of crime that range from murder, sexual assault to property crimes and physical assaults. The role victim advocates have all over the state is vital to bridge the many gaps and assist individuals whose lives have been upheaved by crime. I am, thankfully, supported by a wonderful office and State’s Attorney in Rutland County who all take their responsibilities to protect the public very seriously.

As an employee who serves the public, I support legislation that gives Victim Advocates and others the right to collectively bargain for wages, benefits and just cause protections. Just cause would give me the stability and expectation of my job status when there are political changes and funding changes. Additionally, there are benefits that are open to other state employees, such as tuition reimbursement that because of the murky waters of our current legislation, I am unable to access in my current position.”

— *Naomi Roche, Victim Advocate, Rutland County*

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“We are writing to you as the two victim advocates at the Windsor County State’s Attorney’s Office. **We would like to formally offer our support for legislation that would give us the right to collectively bargain with management over wages, benefits and just cause.** This is a bill that we support in its entirety, including the provision for just cause protection. We are both fortunate enough to work in a county where we feel secure and supported by our State’s Attorney, but we understand that this is not necessarily the case for all of our colleagues.

We agree with VSEA’s assertion that Victim Advocates and Administrative Staff are front line employees and not an arm of the State’s Attorneys’ political agenda. As such, it is our belief that these employees should be protected from political staffing decisions. When a new State’s Attorney is elected to office, and makes changes to prosecutorial policy, these changes have little effect on the way administrative staff and victim advocates do their jobs.

Victim advocates are unique in that our funding, and therefore our jobs, is not a guarantee. Our funding feels more at risk than ever given the current political climate, and it is imperative that we take steps to protect our positions and the important services we provide. The first step is gaining the power to collectively bargain. We would appreciate your support in that effort and ask that you introduce this bill in its entirety.

We are both happy to speak with the committee or the legislature should you have additional questions.”

—Meghan L. Place and Daron L. Raleigh, Victim Advocates, Windsor County

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”I support the right for victim advocates to bargain for just cause protection. I have worked for the State for 32 years, 21 years as a Victim Advocate in Franklin County.”

—Kelly Woodward, Victim Advocate, Franklin County