

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin: Survivors of brutal crimes testify at Wisconsin State Capitol in favor of constitutional amendment

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Madison, Wisconsin – Three survivors of brutal crimes testified in the state Capitol today in favor of Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's bipartisan legislation to update our state Constitution, joining lawmakers and Attorney General Brad Schimel in the fight for equal rights for crime victims.

Today's proceeding was a joint hearing of the State Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety and the State Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Survivors Teri Jendusa-Nicolai of Waterford, Christina Traub of Madison, and Keaira Stine of Amherst all spoke before lawmakers.

Here are statements from the survivors, and details on their stories:

Teri Jendusa-Nicolai:

"I've fought not only for my life but also for justice in our legal system, so I know how important equal rights for crime victims truly are. It's time to level the playing field between victims and the criminals who have attacked us – we want equality under the law, nothing more, nothing less."

Read more on Teri's story [here](#).

Christina Traub:

“Every time I entered a courtroom after my attack, I felt pushed to the background. I’m proud to fight for equal rights for crime victims because I know what it’s like to feel like I have no voice in our legal system. I hope lawmakers will see that Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin will make a real difference in the lives of victims and help keep our communities safe.”

Read more on Christina’s story [here](#).

Keaira Stine:

“I didn’t have a choice when I became a victim of sexual assault, but I have a choice today and I hope it’s one our lawmakers make as well. I choose to stand up for equal rights for crime victims because I know it will help keep our children and communities safe.”

Read more on Keaira’s story [here](#).

Below are key facts on Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin’s bipartisan legislation:

- **Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin follows a proud tradition in our state of protecting victims’ rights, unlike many other states.** Wisconsin already has a constitutional amendment on victims’ rights that passed in 1993, and was the first state in the nation to pass a Crime Victims’ Bill of Rights. The state also is recognized as having some of the strongest statutory rights for victims in the country. This means the changes we are proposing are about making sure victims’ rights are truly equal alongside the constitutional rights of the accused – nothing more, nothing less – not introducing new rights as has been done in other states across the country.
- **Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin strengthens rights that already exist in Wisconsin.** The proposed amendment would do two things: Elevate certain rights currently under state statute to be fully constitutional rights, and strengthen other rights that are already part of the Constitution. An example of a right that is the law under state statute but needs to be elevated to the Constitution is the right to put victim restitution payments ahead of any dollars owed to the government. An example of a current constitutional right that needs clarification is the right to be heard throughout the legal process, including release, plea, sentencing, disposition,

parole, revocation, expungement, or pardon – as opposed to just disposition.

· **Marsy's Law for Wisconsin has the support of a broad and growing coalition of victims' rights groups, law enforcement, attorneys, survivors, and members of local communities across the state.** Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's growing statewide coalition includes victims' rights groups like Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, Sojourner Family Peace Center in Milwaukee, and Golden House in Green Bay; Attorney General Brad Schimel and District Attorneys across the state; and law enforcement including the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, The Wisconsin State Lodge Fraternal Order of Police, The Wisconsin Troopers' Association, the Wisconsin Chiefs of Police Association, The Badger State Sheriffs' Association, Wisconsin Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs Association, the Milwaukee Police Association, and dozens of local sheriffs such as Racine County Sheriff Chris Schmaling, and Brown County Sheriff John Gossage.

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About Marsy's Law for Wisconsin

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin is a grassroots coalition that has developed a unique proposal to give victims of crime equal rights in our state, building on Wisconsin's laws and history of leading on this issue. Marsy's Law is named after Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas of California who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend in 1983. Only one week after her death, Marsy's mother and brother, Henry T. Nicholas, walked into a grocery store where they were confronted by the accused murderer. The family, who had just come from a visit to Marsy's grave, was unaware that the accused had been released on bail. In an effort to honor his sister, Dr. Nicholas has made it his life's mission to give victims and their families constitutional protections and equal rights.

Victims and supporters interested in sharing their stories can email Wisconsin@marsyslaw.us.