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Op Ed: A Win for Marsy's Law is a Win for all Pennsylvania Crime Victims

Suzanne V. Estrella, Esq. | November 10, 2021

This November marks two years since nearly three out of four Pennsylvanians voted yes for the Crime Victims' Rights amendment, also known as Marsy's Law.

This anniversary comes on the heels of oral argument before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court who will determine the validity of the amendment and ultimately the path to justice for all victims in Pennsylvania.

Liberty and justice for all means (1) crime victims have the right to be treated fairly and (2) crime victims have a right to due process as they engage in the criminal justice system. With Marsy's Law, victims' rights would be elevated to the state Constitution and those enshrined protections would ensure that victims have no less rights than the accused.

Marsy's Law supports long-standing principles of equality and justice that are crucial for victims as they navigate the complex justice system and seek some form of relief. Pathways to justice should be clear and unfettered.

Right now, in Pennsylvania, there is no protection for crime victims if these rights – like the right to be notified, the right to be present at select hearings, and the right to be heard – are violated. While victims currently have statutory rights through the Crime Victims Act, there is no recourse when those rights are violated.

Victims' rights and Marsy's Law are bi-partisan issues that have received widespread support across the Commonwealth. In November 2019, 1.7 million Pennsylvanians voted yes on Marsy's Law. Crime victims are not asking for an advantage. They are not asking to diminish the rights of the accused. Crime victims are seeking an equal path through a system that has promised liberty and justice for all.

As a community, Pennsylvanians have already agreed that Marsy's Law is what we need.

I remain hopeful that together we can create safer, caring communities where justice thrives.

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