

Mindy Lobaugh - Testimony

Mr. Chairman & Members of the Committee, Thank you for this opportunity and all you do for the State of Alaska

This bill represents a bridge, a bridge that I and many other jurors did not have at the end of a very traumatic trial.

You arrive at the courthouse, given detailed instruction of what is expected of you as a juror and how the process of a trial works. What the court system does not do is transition the juror out of the trial.

It is not uncommon to have major criminal trials run for many days. I served as a juror on the Rachelle Waterman trial 4 years ago and it lasted approximately 10 days. For me I arrived open and ready to do my civic duty as a Juror. And for 10 days prosecutors went into excruciating detail to help the jurors relive the events of an unsuspecting Mother getting abducted from her home, tortured and finally murdered.

It was then our duty to determine if the defendant, her daughter was guilty of masterminding this tragedy against a woman who was a pillar of her community. By the end of the trial I left there as a victim feeling closed, mentally battered and very traumatized by the burden of knowledge I now carried.

I am here to tell you the media does not even come close to covering the depth of this trial. As a juror we had access to piles of emails detailing out various ways these men planned to kill the mother, physical evidence, photographs and of course the hours of testimony.

For quite some time during and following that trial eating for me was a near impossibility because of the constant nausea I felt.

To my friends and family I became a stranger....and each night I prayed myself to sleep.

One of my fellow jury mates was pregnant with her second child. She had shared her excitement and ultrasound pictures with us early on. By the end of the trial she lost her baby and had to be excused from the trial.

When this trial ended with a hung jury I turned to the presiding judge and ask if the courts offer some kind of counseling or process to help jurors deal with all this traumatizing information? The answer was NO.

For me it was like having a door slammed in my face. There would be no help in transitioning back to my life before this trial, no bridge. Rather I would have to move forward with this dark knowledge deeply entrenched in my mind and the minds of my fellow jurors.

It was at this point I felt the court system had failed me as a juror doing my civic duty.

Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee, Please help me to build this bridge by supporting HB52 Post Trial Jury Counseling. I may not have found closure with respects to this trial but maybe you can help build that bridge for future Jurors doing their civic duty by passing HB52.

Thank you so much for your time and I am open to any questions you may have.

Submitted by Rep. Kerttula's OFFICE