

# Testimony supporting bill H8055

I'd like to start by saying thank you to the Members of the House Judiciary Committee for allowing me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of Victims of assault with intent to Murder. Too often victims struggle to come forward due to the lasting trauma and the very real fear of being forced to relive their experience. Today I stand before you despite that reality in the hope my voice and presence stays with you long after this testimony is over.

For those of you who don't know me, I was the girl who was attacked at the Rite Aid Pharmacy on post road back in 2017. I was working my part time job when I was grabbed from behind and stabbed repeatedly with a large kitchen knife at the hands of a man I didn't know. I was stabbed in the chest first, inches away from my heart, I was then thrown to the floor where the assault continued, I was stabbed repeatedly in my abdomen, legs, and arm. After the attacker was restrained I remember looking down, my blood covering every inch of that floor, even seeping under shelving. My left arm almost nearly severed trying to protect my face from the attacker as he was trying to stab me in my face. My abdomen was ripped open and my intestines were hanging out of my body. That sight was the moment I knew I was going to die.

As I laid there I remembered a couple weeks earlier my biology teacher Mr. Hall told us if we were ever in an Emergency to stay calm because when you panic your heart pumps more blood and you'll bleed out quicker. So I lied there counting the ceiling tiles and spelling out my name for the first responding officer. When paramedics got there they cut off all of my clothes and rushed me out of there. In the ambulance they all worked quickly, shouting at each other for what they needed and working on my wounds immediately. I remember at this point still trying to remain calm and talk to the paramedics and I told one of them "I don't want to die, this is my senior year and I want to go to prom, I want to graduate." I could see that man tear up as he promised me I'd do all of those things. When we got to the hospital and I was in the OR I recall a nurse braiding my bloody hair to get it out of my face. I remember the gas mask going over my face, and I looked at her exhausted and asked "Can I close my eyes now?"

When I woke up I was surrounded by my family, my mom right next to me. I still had a tube down my throat and my body felt numb. My recovery itself was brutal. I remember getting up to use the bathroom for the first time my stables were bleeding as I walked just a few feet to the bathroom. I remember waking up all hours of the night screaming in the ICU. I remember my first shower after the attack, I couldn't have one right away and I begged and begged to have one so I could get the dried blood out from under my fingernails and my hair washed. When I was finally moved over to the Rehab floor I remember doing physical therapy and having to practice how to walk. I remember the first time seeing my left arm, two nurses came to take the cast off and I burst out into uncontrollable sobs as they quietly tried to clean up my arm, trying their

hardest not to make direct eye contact with me but it was evident that would be a point in their career they would never forget.

I survived that day against all odds due to sheer will and expert medical intervention. However survival does not mean absence of harm. What was left behind was not just my trauma but a ripple effect that touched everyone around me; My family, my friends, the first responders, the nurses, my classmates, my entire community. And yet when it came to sentencing my survival was treated like a technicality. The man who attacked me intended to kill me. He planned to kill someone. He simply failed. My survival became a loophole, one that allowed him a lesser sentence that did not feel proportionate to his actions.

This bill is something I hold incredibly close to my heart. While many in this room may have had the privilege of a full night's rest leading up to today, I have not. I've been losing sleep in preparation for today, the weight of this issue never leaving me.. As the victim I am living a life sentence for a crime committed against me. I lost the use of my left hand after this attack and live every single day with the lasting effects of ptsd. There are no breaks, no relief and no end date to what I carry.

And yet under the current statute my attacker faces as little as 1 year and a maximum of 20. The contrast is impossible to ignore. While I live with permanent consequences the law allows for temporary accountability.

It's time for us to step up and truly support and protect victims and today is a critical step towards that responsibility. This moment has the potential to be historic for the Rhode Island Legislature and each of you have the opportunity to be on the right side of history. As long as I have a voice, I will continue to use it to stand victims, their families and the community. Today I am asking you to do the same. Stand with Victims and send a clear and unwavering message that Rhode Island values and protects the lives of the innocent.

Thank you,

Alyssa Garcia