



State Attorney

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Dear Commissioner Cerio:

I write in support of Proposal 96, which amends Article I of the Florida State Constitution to elevate the rights of victims of crime. As the State Attorney for the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida, my team and I work tirelessly to support those impacted by criminal acts. I am proud to bring additional support and status to victims as they navigate the criminal justice process.

Every year, more than half a million Floridians are victims of crime, with nearly one hundred thousand being victims of violent crime like murder, rape, and robbery. The trauma of being a victim quietly extends beyond visible physical injuries or financial loss. Victims endure anxiety, fear, and perhaps most importantly, shaken confidence in both the goodness of humanity and society's ability to protect them from harm. Because crime victims often endure life-changing events and continue to thrive despite these hardships, they are truly survivors.

For these survivors, the justice process often leads to frustration and re-traumatization. I have sat with victims and their families in their homes, in interviews, and in courtrooms, holding their hands as they relive their experience of suffering and loss. Despite our best efforts, victims and their loved ones frequently do not receive closure from the criminal justice process. Their pain does not vanish when the case closes. Notwithstanding the tremendous work of prosecutors, law enforcement, and support groups that care for victims, the promise of justice that lies at the heart of our criminal system often remains out of their reach. We can do better.

We must affirm our commitment to supporting victims during their most vulnerable moments by enshrining their rights in Florida's Constitution. The Constitution is our state's most sacred document, identifying and preserving our most cherished principles, and victims' rights deserve a place among our declared values. This living, breathing document—one-hundred pages long and containing approximately 60,000 words—makes little mention of crime victims. The time has come to correct that injustice. While legislators, counties, and state attorneys throughout Florida have developed elaborate processes and programs to support victims of crime, this constitutional pronouncement says with one strong, unambiguous voice: Florida protects and supports our fellow survivors *always*.

Elevating victims' rights to our Constitution ensures that our system treats victims with fairness and dignity. It guarantees that they have a voice throughout the process. Proposal 96 will give constitutional status to the steps we take to minimize the trauma of victims repeatedly reliving the crime. It will further protect victims from harassment and intimidation. It will protect their privacy. It will help them receive

restitution. Despite arguments to the contrary, Proposal 96 protects these rights without diminishing a defendant's Constitutional rights to due process.

The disturbing truth is that far too many victims never embrace the criminal justice system because they are too frightened to report the crime. We must take bold action to better balance victims' rights within the criminal justice process. Elevating these rights not only empowers victims but also reaffirms the work that prosecutors and law enforcement already perform. It will truly inspire the work of community agencies that support victims. Proposal 96 is a tremendous first step to ensure full protection of the rights of innocent victims.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue. There is certainly work to do to finalize the language of this proposal in a manner that safeguards the judicial process. I stand ready, willing, and able to work with the Constitutional Revision Commission and all partners in the criminal justice system to support survivors of crime.

Respectfully,



Andrew H. Warren
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