



March 1, 2023

As the Executive Director of the National Center for Victims of Crime, I am writing with concerns regarding two bills currently before the Florida Legislature, HB 837 and HB 1165. I hope Florida residents will share my concerns.

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In Florida right now, businesses that are aware that crime is possible on their property must take reasonable action to keep their property safe. However, a provision in HB 837 seeks to allow businesses and corporations in civil lawsuits to blame the killer, rapist, or assailant when a crime occurs, and avoid being held accountable for their own negligence. This is equivalent to providing these businesses with a "Get Out of Jail Free" card. Not holding businesses accountable for using common sense security and crime prevention measures will, eventually, embolden businesses to relax security measures and procedures that keep individuals and communities safe.

In my work with the National Center, I am often asked to assist victims of crime in filing civil lawsuits. I assure you, not one survivor has ever told me they wanted a large jury verdict. They know that no amount of money will make them whole or replace the years they lost. Instead, the most profound — and most-stated — reason that they have for pursuing these claims is that so no one else has to be hurt in the way they were.

Individuals come to us not about money or lawsuits, but about affecting policy changes so that the tragedy that occurred to their family will never happen again. Their courage in coming forward is often the impetus for businesses to implement common sense security measures that keep individuals and communities safe. Many businesses have security measures and procedures to protect crime victims because they know they can be held responsible if they are negligent.

Passing these bills will NOT result in less crime. In fact, it will result in MORE crime. Why would commercial properties provide reasonable security if they knew they would never be held accountable? If these bills pass, property owners will feel less incentive to provide reasonable security at their properties.

I ask that the senators and representatives of Florida vote to keep the citizens of Florida safe as they did with the recent passing of Miya's Law.

Keep the criminal accountable in the criminal justice system. Keep business owners accountable in the civil justice system. VOTE NO ON HB 837 and HB 1165.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Renee E. Williams".

Executive Director | The National Center for Victims of Crime

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