

March 22, 2022

Mary Seawright

My name is Mary Seawright, and I am a crime victim in Ohio. I would like for the lawmakers and the representatives of Ohio to realize that all crime victims deserve to be treated with fairness and respect during the criminal justice process. I would also like them to understand the many frustrations and trauma that is endured throughout the criminal justice system. For me, it all began on October 15, 2017, when I was invited to Antioch Baptist Church to attend a prison outreach ministry program. This is where I met Mr. Freddie Barnes who told us he had operated the program for 10 years. I told the group of attendees that I had an office at 7504 Cedar Avenue and that I wanted to use the office to hold meetings for families of incarcerated people. Mr. Burns announced that he wanted to speak with me after the program ended. He asked if he could come see the office, I told him he could, and so he came that Tuesday or Wednesday. I showed him the office space in which he said he liked it and wanted to know how much the rent would be.

I told Mr. Barnes that I have a special place in my heart for people who have loved ones that are incarcerated and have no support system. I told him if he would be willing to make the repairs and supply the materials that I would let him use the office with no rent involved, but that he would be responsible for all utilities. He said he would agree to that. I provided him with a tour of the building. I gave Mr. Barnes the keys shortly after the day I provided him with a tour.

On October 25, 2017, when I went to my office that morning I opened the shutter door to the front of the building, and the door to my office. The chairs were overturned, papers were scattered across the floor and the place was a wreck. I called the police, and they came out and took a report. I also saw that my Smith and Wesson 9mm automatic pistol was stolen along with keys for my property. This includes all the keys to the apartments that are over the storefront. I then had to replace all the door locks to my office building and all the door locks to the apartments above and had to issue new mailbox keys.

From 10 in the morning of October 25, 2017, I worked constantly making trips to Home Depot and calling contractors who would do a rush job. All those locks had to be replaced before I could leave to go home because I could not take a chance of anything else being burglarized since he had taken all the keys. He also stole a bust of Dr. Martian Luther King Jr and tools from my property. I did not leave from Cedar Avenue until around 3 the next morning, everyone was complaining about working in the cold and the tenants were complaining that they were being disturbed late at night. This was an inconvenience to all involved. I was a nervous wreck for days after that ordeal; this crime had caused me severe stress and anxiety which affected my everyday life. However, I was not only victimized by Frederick Barnes, but I was also victimized by those in the criminal justice system.

The judge involved showed no compassion for me as a victim, my rights were often overlooked especially regarding restitution. I did my part as a victim to provide the court with receipts and documentation that demonstrate the money I was owed by the defendant. However, the judge involved never ordered restitution for my case despite having the receipts and documentation available. Luckily, I was aware of my rights under Marsy's Law and was able to

obtain counsel to help rectify the wrongdoing of this judge. Four years have now passed since the crime occurred, and I am still waiting on a restitution hearing to be conducted and for my voice to be heard. The appeals process has been full of delays, and I continue to have to wait to find out if and when a restitution hearing will be held. This should not be the experience that crime victims are faced with. Moving forward, I am hopeful that this piece of legislation will help solidify victims' rights in Ohio and help provide victims with the justice and treatment that they deserve. Thank you for allowing me to speak on this matter and share my story.

Respectfully,

Mary Seawright