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Mai Fernandez

June 22, 2010

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Conyers:

The National Center for Victims of Crime applauds you for your work to extend civil remedies for victims of crime through the Securing Protections for the Injured from Limitations on Liability Act, H.R. 5503. We strongly support provisions within H.R. 5503 that would amend the Death on the High Seas Act (DOHSA) to permit recovery of non-pecuniary damages by the decedent's family, as well as other important changes. We also support provisions that would amend the Jones Act to allow the families of seamen who are killed to seek recovery of non-pecuniary damages. Such changes would remedy existing limitations that restrict the recovery available to certain victims of crime through the civil justice process.

Over the past few years, we have become aware of a subset of crime victims who have had little access to criminal or civil justice—those victimized by crime on cruise ships. Amending the DOHSA would permit the families of those killed at sea to seek full recovery for their losses and hold someone responsible for the harm they have sustained.

The National Center has championed the rights and interests of victims of crime for 25 years. This has included strong support for full access to the civil justice process for victims. Civil actions provide victims an opportunity to have their "day in court," regardless of whether there was a criminal conviction or even any prosecution. H.R. 5503 would strengthen access to justice for victims of crime on the high seas.

Thank you for all you do to support victims of crime. We urge your colleagues to join you in supporting greater access to civil justice for victims of crime.

Sincerely,

Mai Fernandez