

# Legislators file Conrad's Law" to criminalize suicide coercion in Massachusetts

This morning at the Statehouse in Boston, members of the late Conrad Roy's family joined Senator Barry Finegold (D –Andover) and Representative Natalie Higgins (D – Leominster) to announce the filing of "Conrad's Law," a bill that would criminalize suicide coercion in Massachusetts. The narrowly tailored piece of legislation calls for a maximum five-year prison term for anyone convicted of the crime. The lead co-sponsor in the Senate is Sen. Mark Montigny (D-New Bedford)

Under the proposed law, a defendant can be convicted of suicide coercion if the defendant knows of another person's propensity for suicidal ideation and either:

(1) (i) Exercise substantial control over the other person through control of the other person's physical location or circumstances; deceptive or fraudulent manipulation of the other person's fears, affections, or sympathies; or undue influence whereby the will of 1 person is substituted for the wishes of another;

(ii) intentionally coerces or encourages that person to commit or attempt to commit suicide; and

(iii) as a result of the coercion or encouragement, in whole or in part, that other person commits or attempts to commit suicide; or

(2) (i) Intentionally provides the physical means, or knowledge of such means, to the other person for the purpose of enabling that other person to commit or attempt to commit suicide and, as a result, the other person commits or attempts to commit suicide; or

(ii) participates in a physical act which causes, aids, encourages or assists the other person in committing or attempting to commit suicide.

Bristol County District Attorney Thomas M. Quinn III, whose office successfully prosecuted Michelle Carter on an indictment charging her with involuntary manslaughter in connection to the 2014 death of Conrad Roy in Fairhaven, supports the legislation and issued the following statement today:

“With suicide rates and bullying on the rise, it is imperative that we do all we can to protect our most vulnerable populations from those who would take advantage of someone in a state of mental or emotional distress. While the charge of involuntary manslaughter has been shown to fit in the most egregious of cases, it is important for Massachusetts to join with 40 other states across the country who have already passed suicide by coercion laws for those cases that do not rise to the level of manslaughter. My office is keenly aware of the roller coaster of emotions the Roy family has gone through during the past five years. After losing their son forever, they soon learned from police and prosecutors that he was the victim of a crime and that his close friend had callously violated their trust. The family then had to sit through years of court proceedings, a widely publicized trial, the onslaught of media coverage and an appeal to the Supreme Judicial Court before finally getting the measure of justice they deserved. Throughout the entire process, Lynn Roy and the entire family presented themselves with grace and dignity. My office is proud to support Lynn Roy, Senators Finegold, and Montigny, along with Rep. Higgins, in this critical legislative effort and I look forward to testifying on behalf of the bill when it gets its hearing.”