

Working Draft of
George Bochetto Opening Statement to U.S. House
Committee on the Judiciary Hearing on “*Victims of*
***Violent Crime in Philadelphia*”**
Friday, May 3, 2024

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, Good

Morning:

My name is George Bochetto. I have lived and worked in Philadelphia for the better part of 50 years. I am here today as a citizen and a lawyer who has dedicated his adult life to due process and the rule of law. During my legal career, I have represented many public officials and public figures in high profile cases in courts across the country, including the U.S. Supreme Court and many states Supreme Courts, and I was the lead attorney hired by the PA House of Representatives regarding the Impeachment of Larry

Krasner. It is truly an honor to be invited to give testimony to the Committee on this very important topic – *Victims of Violent Crime in Philadelphia* – and I thank Chairman Jordan and all Committee Members for the opportunity.

Larry Krasner took over the District Attorneys’ office in 2018. What followed was unprecedented explosion of crime and violence. Through a combination of progressive malice and endless incompetence, Krasner has actively encouraged criminal behavior. In Krasner’s first term in office the number of murders in the city increased by SEVENTY EIGHT PERCENT. In 2021 there were more murders here than at *any time in the recorded history of the city!*

In a single year 562 human beings had their lives stolen in the birthplace of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

This almost incomprehensible level of violence is the direct and predictable result of Krasner's nihilistic policies and practices. He justifies his actions as necessary for the protection of the poor and minority citizens of Philadelphia but no one has suffered more than the poor and minority victims in this city. It is the widows and the mothers and fathers of murder victims who pay the price for Krasner's twisted view of what a District Attorney's responsibilities are. The price paid is exemplified by more examples than I can recite here today but what follows is I believe materially representative sample.

There is no more notorious case in the history of the city of Philadelphia than the execution style murder of Police Officer Danny Faulkner. His killer Mumia Abu Jamal was convicted by a jury of First Degree Murder based on

overwhelming evidence, including his admission that : “I shot the m.....f..... and hope he dies.” Since Officer Faulkner’s murder in 1981, his widow Maureen has waged a decades long battle against progressive charlatans’ intent on freeing her husband’s murderer. In 2019 Jamal filed his 5th post conviction appeal. D.A. Krasner declined to oppose Jamal’s Application for a Remand which as a matter of law he was required to do. I petitioned the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in a Kings Bench Appeal to prevent Krasner from tanking the case. Fortunately, the attention of the Supreme Court quickly convinced Krasner he was trying to free the wrong stone-cold killer. But there have been many, many other examples of prosecutorial misconduct and many others who have gained their freedom only to commit more murders.

Michael Richardson was an African American, father of 5, Manager of a Rite Aid store. Michael was executed while lying on the floor praying and begging for his life. The murderer Lavar Brown fled the scene and committed another execution style murder at a gas station a block away. Brown was arrested, convicted and sentenced before Krasner became DA. After Krasner was elected , Brown filed an appeal to have his case reversed. Krasner waited 17 months, until the day before the appeal hearing to notify the Michael's widow Kristi Richardson that an appeal had been filed. Then Krasner filed legal papers *agreeing with the murder's petition to undo his conviction* without ever speaking to the widow.

Charles “Chali Khan” Gossett, an African American music producer was murdered outside a restaurant in West. His killer, Jahmir Harris, should have been in state prison serving a life sentence for the murder Krasner’s office let Harris out of jail by concocting a phony exoneration. Here is just part of what the Common Pleas Judge, Rosemary Defino-Nastasi, a former Public Defender, said of Krasner’s office’s conduct in that case:

“.....this Court is left wondering whether the Commonwealth has acted in good faith and been forthright in its investigation into this case and whether or not they have truly turned over every stone for our citizens.”

Judge Defino Nastasi made those remarks on March 12, 2021 in reaction to Krasner's decision to release Harris from jail. One year and 6 months later Harris ambushed and killed Mr. Gossett.

Robert Wharton, was convicted in 1985 of the strangulation murder of an African American minister and his wife during a home invasion. Wharton left the victims' infant daughter in the house and turned the heat off so she would freeze to death. The infant daughter, Lisa Hart-Newman, miraculously survived. When Wharton filed to reverse the death penalty imposed by a jury Krasner conceded. Krasner's office lied to the court claiming they had "communicated with the victims" even though they had never had any contact with the only living victim, Lisa Hart Newman. The presiding federal Judge Mitchell Goldberg

sanctioned Krasner’s office – and Krasner personally – for an “egregious” and “exceptional” violation of the rules of court for asserting “without ‘evidentiary support’ that it had conceded the jury’s penalty “following communication with the victim’s family.”

That sanction was recently affirmed by the 3rd Circuit Court of Appeals. Krasner pro-criminal philosophy was best described by Lisa Hart Newman in the aftermath of Krasner misconduct:

“The perpetrator of those crimes has already determined that his needs and his life were the only ones that really mattered.

District attorneys like Larry Krasner look at them and say, “You know what? You’re right.” So, it doesn’t matter if we believe women or men. It doesn’t matter what the accusation is. The outcome is already determined. If you commit a crime in this city, violent or non-violent, past or present, don’t worry about it. The DA’s office is under new management now and they’re going to make sure your rights are the only ones protected.”

D.A. Krasner also considers himself a one-man legislature. The state Constitution empowers the legislature

with the *sole* authority to make the laws. D.A. Krasner has unilaterally decriminalized broad categories of conduct by fiat as if he – and he alone – has the ability to declare conduct legal.

The Pennsylvania Crimes Code criminalizes Prostitution and related offenses. That is the law in Pennsylvania.

Human trafficking is a crime. Despite that fact, in Philadelphia, it is now legal. Did the legislature do that?

No. Larry Krasner issued a memo decriminalizing prostitution. He did so without a plan to work with law enforcement to shut down demand, or to provide any social services to those exploited by prostitution.

Theft is also against the law in Pennsylvania. The legislature didn't repeal that statute either. But in

Philadelphia D.A. Krasner has decriminalized theft – if the amount is less than the \$500. Has anyone here ever spent \$500 in a Rite Aid or Wawa or a corner store? In Philadelphia, you can now steal that much and nothing will happen to you because Larry Krasner has decriminalized theft.

Businesses are fleeing the City. Walgreens closed their Center City store, Wawa left the city, Starbucks, H&M, store after store driven to closure because D.A. Krasner has declared retail theft legal. And, the neighborhood pharmacy and bodega -you don't hear about them – but they too are suffering because D.A. Krasner has exceeded his authority and legalized crime.

There too many more examples to recite in the time of have but I will remain for your questions and can cite to

other specific examples if necessary. In closing I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the critical topic and urge the members to continue the effort to combat the kind of destructive governance exemplified by the current city prosecutor Philadelphia.