

Concerns grow over bills to overhaul state criminal justice system

Posted: Feb 12, 2019 5:27 PM EST Feb 12, 2019 5:27 PM EST
Updated: Feb 12, 2019 5:27 PM EST Feb 12, 2019 5:27 PM EST

MINEOLA - There's growing concern about criminal justice bills pending in Albany that would impact those held on bail and a suspect's access to information about witnesses and victims.

Ean Soley was arrested in 2015 for alleged domestic violence but spent two years in jail awaiting trial because he couldn't pay his \$100,000 bail. All charges were eventually dismissed, but attorney Fred Brewington says it's time that Soley will never get back.

Brewington says there are many people in Soley's position and that he supports the current criminal justice bills being debated in Albany, including one on bail reform.

The bail reform bills would have no bail set for suspects in certain cases of rape, child porn, sex abuse and strangulation. The Nassau Police Benevolent Association calls the idea "problematic" and says some suspects pose a great risk of not appearing in court.

In addition to bail reform, there's a bill that would affect what's known as discovery, the process in which the prosecution is required to turn over evidence to the defense. Right now, they have weeks to do it. But under the new bill, they would have just 15 days.

Keith Scott, of the Safe Center, says such a law could keep victims from coming forward.

District attorneys statewide have also been voicing their concern over the bail and discovery bills. Nassau District Attorney Madeline Singas said in a statement that while she supports making the criminal justice system "more fair," "there is no reason to rush these bills."

Albany lawmakers have said they will continue to debate the bills and hold off on a vote until the end of the month.