

Victim Impact Statement

Name: Alisha Schmit

Relationship to the Victim: Cousin

Case Number: 214-2024-CR-00028

Date: 12/1/2025

Dear Judge Frizzell,

My name is Alisha Schmit, and I am the cousin of Caitlyn Nafziger. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share how this loss has affected me and my family.

Cait was authentic—she danced to the beat of her own drum, was strong, hardworking, and completely dedicated to her girls. She was known for being goofy, always making time for her people, and for telling you not what you wanted to hear, but what you needed to hear.

Some of my favorite memories of Cait include camping in our grandparents' meadow, dressing up as elves for our family Christmas party (and convincing all of our little cousins we were real elves), and cousin sleepovers where all five of us pooled our allowances, walked to the local gas station, and created the weirdest food combos for our movie nights.

For me, Cait was one of those special people I knew I could always rely on, even if we hadn't talked in a while.

Since her death, my life—and the lives of my family—has changed in the following ways:

- Cait was one of four twins in our family. After her brother Bailey was born, my brother and I were the first set of twins, followed by Cait and her twin sister Taylor five weeks later. The five of us were a little unit, growing up together—spending time between our houses, our grandparents, and at school. I never imagined we wouldn't grow old together. Losing her feels like losing a piece of our family puzzle. I've known her all my life, and we were supposed to have so much more time together.
- Cait was one of my people. We could talk about everything and anything. If this had happened to someone else, she would have been the person I confided in. I've lost someone who understood me at every stage of life—and vice versa. We helped each other learn, grow, and live fully.
- My aunt lost her daughter, my cousins lost their sister and twin, we lost our cousin, and most importantly, her daughters lost their mom.

Family and Daily Life Impact

After her death, I was one of the family members who spent time in New Hampshire with my Aunt Lori to care for the girls before they could return to Minnesota. Seeing the early effects of what Dustin did to them was devastating:

- Cait and I share a similar look and stature. When I walked in the door to see the girls for the first time after everything happened, Vaelyn saw me, lit up, and ran over repeating “Mama” until she realized I wasn’t Cait. This continued each day of the two weeks I was there, especially when she would wake up—it broke my heart.
- Elowyn, on the other hand, was processing what she had witnessed. She repeatedly asked Lori and me why her dad “pew-pewed” her mom and acted out the incident with her dolls. She talked daily about how her dad hurt her mom, that she was in heaven, and that her dad wasn’t coming back.
- While Elowyn tried to rationalize what she saw, her body reacted to the trauma. She had several full-body tantrums each day, triggered by the smallest things. Each episode sent her into hysterics, sometimes lasting up to an hour and a half. We had to remind her to breathe and talk her down from hyperventilating.

Once back in Minnesota, I’ve continued to be part of the girls’ support system as they’ve been under the care of Cait’s brother and sister-in-law, Bailey and Heather. While caring for the girls, I’ve witnessed:

- Vaelyn is struggling with attachment. For a while, she wanted to be constantly held. Even after progress, she still needed to keep you in sight or she’d become upset.
- Elowyn’s tantrums were severe. She would dissociate and panic if you weren’t holding her, screaming “Not alone” or calling for her mom. The only comfort was her lovey, and even that only partially calmed her. It often took 1–2 hours to help her settle.
- Elowyn also tries to control people, things, and events—anything to feel less scared. Early on, meltdowns happened multiple times a day. Those of us caring for the girls alongside Bailey and Heather worked hard to provide structure, consistency, and reassurance that we would not abandon her. While she’s improved, she still struggles during times of change and has difficulty regulating emotions. She still checks with me when I leave to make sure I’ll come back.
- Elowyn continues to panic in situations where she feels out of control—doctor visits, dentist appointments, or larger groups. This isn’t normal childhood fear; it’s

full-on panic. While we are working on this with her therapist, it's heartbreaking that she faces this level of fear because of her dad's actions.

Losing Cait has permanently changed our family. Her death—and the nature of it—has been crippling.

Financial or Practical Impact

Personally, I haven't had the same financial impact as my cousins and aunt. However, I did have to pay for a flight to New Hampshire, take a week and a half off work, and contribute to purchasing items the girls needed (diapers, food, etc.) while we worked to bring them home.

I've also had the ongoing expense of bi-weekly grief therapy.

Long-Term Effects

Along with other family members, I've been seeing a grief therapist. Therapy has helped me process losing Cait and witnessing what the girls have endured, which deepens my own pain. It was also necessary to cope with the stress of Dustin's trial and the custody case.

Something I continue to struggle with is that Dustin was able to take the stand and say everything he wanted, painting his own picture of Cait and defending himself. After what he did, to try and blame her for her own death and make false accusations about her as a mom and person, is unfathomable. I cannot understand how he rationalizes his actions.

Our family will now raise Cait's girls. While we wouldn't want it any other way given the circumstances, they should still have their mom. The girls will continue to struggle with how Dustin's actions upended their lives, and they'll need ongoing therapy and resources.

Elowyn now lives with the memory of witnessing what her dad did to her mom, and Vaelyn is growing up without truly knowing her mother, while Elowyn is likely to lose the memories, she has with her mom over time.

Personally, I miss Cait every day. I'm learning to accept that I can no longer talk to her, have our hangouts, watch our families grow together, or grow old with her.

Impact of Domestic Violence

Losing Caitlyn to domestic violence has affected us by:

- For starters, who imagines losing a loved one in the way Dustin took Cait? I wouldn't wish this on anyone.
- Dustin not only tore apart his own family, but he permanently changed ours as well. We now have the burden of trying to explain what he did to his children.

Thoughts for the Court

If allowed, I wish the court to consider:

- Dustin truly believes he was not wrong in killing Caitlyn. His thought process, rationale, and inability to accept accountability make him unsafe for society. I ask the court to hold him fully accountable under the law. Doing so will make the community safer and hopefully help Dustin understand the gravity of his actions.

In Closing

Caitlyn's life mattered. She was a devoted mother, a loving daughter, sister, and cousin, and a friend to so many. Her absence has left a permanent void in our family and in the lives of her daughters. No sentence can undo what has been done, but holding Dustin fully accountable is the only way to honor Caitlyn's memory and protect our community. I ask the court to impose the maximum penalty allowed by law to reflect the gravity of his actions and the devastation they have caused.

Thank you,

Alisha Schmit

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