

FATHER SUES STATE, POLICE OVER PROBE: MAN WANTS DATA RELEASED IN DAUGHTER'S DISAPPEARANCE

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HAVERHILL, N.H. - From the moment his daughter disappeared on Feb. 9, 2004, Fred Murray believed she was a victim of foul play. Maura Murray, a 21-year-old nursing student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, vanished that night after a minor car accident on Route 112 in Haverhill. Police searched the area repeatedly, but said they have no evidence of foul play.

Fred Murray, however, has been highly critical of police, and he met with Governor John Lynch earlier this year to ask for his help in getting records of the investigation. Now, he has sued Lynch, Attorney General Kelly Ayotte, State Police, and other law enforcement agencies, seeking the release of information such as accident reports; an inventory of items taken from her car; a copy of his daughter's computer hard drive; and a surveillance tape from a liquor store where she made a purchase.

A hearing on Murray's request has been scheduled for Jan. 18 at Grafton County Superior Court. Ayotte said yesterday that she had not seen the lawsuit, which was filed last week, but that "we have shared whatever information we feel we can share without jeopardizing the investigation."

She said that Maura Murray's case is still that of a missing person, but that "it was a suspicious disappearance."

"We've treated the case very seriously," Ayotte said.

But Fred Murray contends he hasn't been made aware of "any specific efforts the governmental authorities have taken in pursuing this matter within the past several months."

"The most compelling reason favoring disclosure in this case centers on the fact that Maura could very well still be in danger, and disclosure of the information compiled by authorities could help locate her," the lawsuit says.

Ayotte said that between State Police, the Fish and Game Department, other law-enforcement agencies, and her own office, thousands of hours have been spent on the investigation.

"The case continues to be pursued vigorously," she said. "Mr. Murray's had frequent contact with both my office and members of the State Police. In fact, I personally met with him along with lead investigators of the State Police last spring, and he was assigned a victim's witness advocate from my office."

The case will be featured on the ABC newsmagazine "20/20" next month. A \$40,000 reward is offered for information leading to the woman's safe return.