

Murder defendant Cara Rintala fights for release on bail after SJC overturns 2016 conviction

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NORTHAMPTON — With predictable resistance from prosecutors, lawyers for murder defendant Cara Rintala are fighting for her release on bail after the Supreme Judicial Court [overturned a 2016 conviction](#) for killing her wife.

Defense lawyers ask that she be released from state prison to live with her parents and her teen daughter in Rhode Island as she awaits trial — where she had lived before when she was awaiting previous trials.

“We have been raising her daughter through all of this but now that she is a teenager, she needs her mother more than ever,” Rintala’s father wrote in a letter to the Hampshire Superior Court.

Rintala was tried twice for allegedly strangling her wife, Annamarie Cochrane Rintala, and leaving her in the basement of the couple’s Granby home in 2010. Those trials resulted in hung juries, prompting mistrials. But, she was tried a third time in Hampshire Superior Court in 2016 and found guilty of first-degree murder.

Both women were local paramedics and had somewhat of a tumultuous relationship, according to trial witnesses.

After her conviction, Rintala’s lawyers appealed on a number of grounds over the summer. The state’s high court on Sept. 27 granted Rintala a new trial with a ruling that certain expert testimony on what appeared to be a fresh paint job at the crime scene had been improperly introduced at trial.

Steven Gagne, first assistant district attorney in Hampshire County, immediately signaled their intent to try Rintala a fourth time for murder. Meanwhile, Rintala attorney Chauncey Wood said he would move for his client’s swift release on bail.

However, prosecutors have appealed to the Supreme Judicial Court to reverse its own ruling on the conviction, calling for an evidentiary hearing Gagne previously argued to the court was unnecessary.

The commonwealth also stalled a procedural step allowing defense attorneys to file a conventional motion for bail. So, Rintala’s lawyers responded by filing a motion before the trial court to reverse an earlier denial to grant Rintala bail while she was awaiting the results of what ultimately was a successful appeal.

Wood argues in his motion for bail that Rintala lived a law-abiding life and had no criminal record before being convicted of murder and has been making the most of her time behind bars.

“The American VetDogs program resumed and Cara was awarded a coveted position training a new puppy to assist disabled veterans, based on her stellar prison record,” Wood wrote.

The attorney also argues that Rintala has maintained community and family support, which only swelled after the recent reversal of her conviction.

“Family and friends have stepped up to offer Cara support both emotionally and financially. They remain ready to support her upon her release from prison and welcome her back to the community,” the motion for release reads.

A judge previously [agreed to release Rintala on \\$150,000 cash bail](#) in 2014 in between her second and third trials.

A judge on Oct. 5 gave prosecutors 10 days to respond to the motion.