

February 27, 2009

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Bill Tuthill and I am a retired Warden and Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Correction. I retired from the State in 1992 and currently work for a nonprofit organization that has contracts with the State. I have worked with offenders for almost forty years. I am here to support raised bill #6578.

The fact that I worked in the criminal justice system for so many years does not confer any special qualification to have an opinion regarding the death penalty except that I am sure that I have spent more time and thought on the subject than most. The views I express are mine alone.

There is ample evidence that the death penalty does not deter crime. In fact, the opposite may very well be true. We know of death row exonerations based on DNA or other evidence. We know that the poor and minorities are disproportionately represented in our prisons and on death row. If we are honest, we recognize that you get just as much justice as you can afford and that race is a significant factor in the criminal justice system. We know that our judicial districts within Connecticut disproportionately apply the death penalty. We know that the death penalty will always be imposed in a random fashion that defies fundamental fairness due to the innumerable variables that affect the outcome of any given prosecution. We have heard of botched executions in spite of the best efforts of officials. We have heard of the reluctance of health professionals to be

involved in the execution of these death sentences. We have all heard of the States that have suspended executions due to concerns for fairness and other humane concerns.

What rationale for the existence of the death sentence remains? Should we justify capital punishment based on our most primitive retributive impulses?

Our law enforcement apparatus cannot and never will be able to fairly and without possibility of error administer the death penalty. The existence of the death penalty debases us all and it should be abolished. I urge you to eliminate the death penalty in Connecticut. The legislative action under consideration is a step in the right direction.

Thank you.

William L. Tuthill

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