

Statement Made by the Rev. Walter Everett  
Before the Connecticut Joint Judiciary Committee March 7, 2011

*In Support of HB-6425 and SB-1035*

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I am a retired Methodist minister who served for 28 years in Connecticut, the last 12 years here in Hartford.

It was while I was living in Easton, in 1987, that my 24-year-old son, Scott, was shot and killed in Bridgeport. I speak from almost 24 years of experience, having known the pain of one who has had a loved one murdered.

I discovered early on that my anger was destroying me, and I had to find a way to begin to heal. For me, that process began with forgiveness. I know that forgiveness is not for everyone, but I also know that waiting for an execution does not allow the process of healing to begin.

We are all aware of the tremendous cost of capital punishment. In these days of budget tightening, it makes little sense to perpetuate the fiction that executions provide closure, when, if they ever happen, it will be only after decades of appeals, with the eventual price of an execution (from the beginning of the case until the death of the offender) costing as much as 3 or 4 times that of imprisonment for life.

Meanwhile the process is extracting an emotional cost on the families of victims. While they wait for an execution that will likely never occur, they are caught in a holding pattern, preventing the beginning of the healing process. As I see it, this is an even greater cost than the financial outlay. The lives of victims' family members ought to be our primary concern.

I maintain that, as is being considered in other states, we would show far greater concern for those who are family members of murder victims (sometimes referred to as secondary victims) by eliminating the death penalty and replacing it with life without parole for those who are a continuing threat to society, AND using the money saved for additional programs of assistance for secondary victims, those who have been hurt the most by the loss of a loved one.

Please consider the long-term needs of these secondary victims, and move to abolish the death penalty this year.