



*Collaborative Center
for Justice, Inc.*

40 Clifford Street
Hartford, CT 06114-1717

Phone: 860-692-3066
Fax: 860-692-3068
E-mail: advocacy@ccfj.org
Web site: www.ccfj.org

Testimony before the General Assembly Judiciary Committee
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In Support of Raised Bill: S.B. 1035 – An Act Repealing The Death Penalty

Good Morning, Senator Coleman, Senator Doyle, Representative Fox and Representative Holder-Winfield, and members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Sister Linda Pepe, CSJ. I am from the Collaborative Center for Justice in Hartford, and I am here this morning representing the six religious congregations of women religious who sponsor The Collaborative Center for Justice. These six congregations represent almost 1,000 Sisters and Associates residing in our State. As women religious, we believe deeply in the God-given sanctity of life, and we are committed to working on social justice issues that impact the poor, the marginalized and the victimized in Connecticut. It is this commitment that compels us to testify in support of S.B. 1035 - *An Act Repealing the Death Penalty* urging you, our State legislators, to engage in an honest and open debate on the issue of abolishing the death penalty.

We acknowledge that horrific violence can, and does, cause unimaginable pain to victims such as Dr. William Petit and the Hawke family, who have experienced this tremendous loss, but the issue of the death penalty cannot revolve around one family, nor should it be continued because of one truly heinous act. We believe it is time in Connecticut to look objectively at this issue of state sanctioned execution. We must together debate the commonly held argument in support of the death penalty, i.e., that the death penalty is a deterrent to violent crime, with the considerations being proposed by those who would abolish the death penalty, i.e., the disproportionate manner in which the death penalty is imposed; the inherent violence connected with the act of execution; the psychological trauma experienced by the victim's families as they endure the trial and countless appeals connected to the judicial process that hesitates to execute an individual regardless of the heinous act for which they have been found guilty; and finally, the legal cost, absorbed by the State, to prosecute and defend during the appeals process.

We are also concerned for the families who are deprived of the opportunity to begin the grieving and healing process, so necessary if they are to move on with their lives. To help these families, we urge you, our legislators, to divest yourselves of the emotions that cloud the issue surrounding the death penalty, and discuss rationally this law which allows the State of Connecticut to execute a human being. In place of the death penalty, we advocate and support a judicial policy of life in prison without the possibility of parole. Such a policy would satisfy the demand for justice, and be devoid of the element of revenge.

We add our voices, and those of our sponsoring congregations membership, to the voices you have already heard asking you to consider abolishing the death penalty in Connecticut. The abolition of the death penalty has too long been part of our State's legislative agenda. It is time to conclude the debate, to join other States who have already moved from state-sanctioned executions, and to abolish the death penalty in Connecticut.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.