

**Testimony of Tom Swan**

**Executive Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG)**

**Judiciary Committee**

**March 14, 2012**

**In Support of SB 280**

Good Afternoon Representative Fox, Senator Coleman and members of the Judiciary Committee my name is Tom Swan and I am the Executive Director of the CT Citizen Action Group (CCAG). I am here today in support of SB 280: AN ACT REVISING THE PENALTY FOR CAPITAL FELONIES.

This is the first time in CCAG's 40 years that we have taken a position on this issue. Our Board voted overwhelmingly earlier this year to support the repeal of the death penalty and to have Connecticut stand on the side of civilized societies.

Before I get further into why we chose to weigh in this year, I want to acknowledge and validate the emotional reasons that some of the proponents of the death penalty argue. My daughter turns one year old today. If she was ever put through anything like what the victims in the Cheshire murders were put through, the death penalty wouldn't be harsh enough and I would want to strangle those that would perpetuate such heinous acts with my own hands.

But, that would not be the right thing to do and neither is having our government being in the business of killing people.

In addition to believing that it is wrong for our state to kill people, there were several facts that helped us decide to weigh in this year.

- Innocent people are too often sentenced to death. According to the ACLU since 1973, over 138 people have been released from death rows in 26 states because of innocence. How many other innocent people were not exonerated before they were put to death? One is too many and we all know that the number is higher than that.
- The death penalty system in the United States is not applied in a fair and just manner. It is dependent on how much money they have, the skill of their attorneys, the race of the victim and the location where the crime took place. Connecticut is considered a leader in anti-discrimination legislation – abolishing the death penalty will further prove that we deserve to be considered such.
- The death penalty is not a deterrent to criminal acts. Resources spent administering the death penalty could be better spent helping victims or on successful crime prevention strategies.

In closing I want to thank you for raising the bill today and to let you know that we are looking forward to working with you to make history by bringing Connecticut into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and abolishing the death penalty this year.