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Statement to the members of the
Connecticut Joint Committee on Judiciary
by Alexander Emmons
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Testifying in favor of SB-280

My name is Alexander Emmons. I am an undergraduate at Yale University, and a member of Amnesty International, USA. A number of Yale students have traveled here this week to show our support for the death penalty's abolition. In past years, nine undergraduate student organizations, six on-campus religious ministries and two Yale Law School groups have worked together for Connecticut to abolish the death penalty. Through discussion panels, phone-banking, canvassing, and lobbying Yale students have continued to show their passion for an end to the death penalty.

As a coordinator of Yale's Amnesty International Chapter, I am not only representing student views, but also those of the five thousand dues-paying Amnesty International Members in the state of Connecticut.

Amnesty International firmly opposes the death penalty, without heed to the gravity of the crime. Amnesty International also identifies the United States as one of the very few countries in the developed world still using the death penalty. The United States ranks fifth in the world for number of prisoners executed annually, behind Yemen and North Korea. And why should it continue to do so, when 139 nations have abolished the practice completely?

Amnesty International believes that the death penalty is the ultimate human rights violation. The death penalty denies a prisoner's right to life, and their chances of reintegration into society. It does so in an impractical, costly, and often discriminatory way. Studies have repeatedly shown that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. Instead it is a society's vengeful statement of retribution. Abolishing the death penalty in Connecticut is not being soft on crime. It is an assertive stance for both justice and progress.