



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

February 19, 2019

The Honorable Robert Renny Cushing, Chair
House Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 204
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: HB 455 (Relative to the Penalty for Capital Murder)

Dear Representative Cushing and Members of the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee:

As the Roman Catholic Bishop of Manchester, I write to express support for HB 455, a bill seeking to repeal the imposition of the death penalty in New Hampshire. I am disappointed I cannot be with you today to share my thoughts with you personally, but having testified before this Committee on the issue of capital punishment, I know how seriously you will assume the responsibility before you to evaluate this legislation.

The crime of murder is outrageous. It is an attack directly on the individual victim and indirectly on the victim's grieving loved ones and, indeed, civilized society itself. Such a grievous offense against humanity demands a response.

However, the death penalty has been shown to be a faulty response. It neither deters others, nor brings the perpetrator to understand the magnitude of the evil of which he or she was capable. The teachings of the Church which I represent and to which I hold firm, recognize that the imposition of the death penalty signals neither a firm commitment to the sacredness of human life itself nor the desire for the betterment of society, but instead signals a collapse into defeat by a society that tries to make itself believe falsely that we can defend life by taking life.

Saint John Paul II challenged followers of Christ to be "unconditionally pro-life," reminding us that "the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done great evil." Although in the past our teaching allowed for capital punishment in rare instances, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, informed by a heightened sense of the dignity of human life, rehabilitation, and mercy now holds that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the human person" (CCC, 2267).

In making this important decision, I ask you to keep in mind those most directly affected by violence and who grieve even now – the families and loved ones of murder victims. I urge you to repeal our death penalty and devote more resources to providing services for them so we may offer a true path of support and healing.

Grateful for your consideration of these thoughts and with deep appreciation for your service to the State of New Hampshire, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Peter A. Libasci, D.D.
Bishop of Manchester