

CONNECTICUT CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
134 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06105-3784

May 28, 2009

MICHAEL C. CULHANE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DEACON DAVID W. REYNOLDS
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON

The Honorable M. Jodi Rell
Governor of Connecticut
State Capitol
Executive Chambers
210 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Governor Rell:

The past several weeks have seen a very intense and emotional debate within the General Assembly concerning the repeal of the death penalty in Connecticut. This issue is clearly one that challenges every elected official as they try to balance the need to protect society from violent offenders and respect the victims of crime, with the need of ensuring that justice is served in a manner that appropriately and equitably punishes the criminal. The General Assembly has had this debate and has determined that the death penalty is not required in our state to meet these ends. We ask that you, therefore, respect the decision of the legislature, as we are in agreement with them on practical and moral grounds, and allow H.B. 6578 to become law in the State of Connecticut.

While Catholic social and moral teaching support the right of any state to protect itself from serious criminals, it has long held that such action does not require the use of the death penalty when the penal system can guarantee the incarceration of an offender for life. The punishment of life imprisonment without the possibility of release clearly and adequately protects society, equitably punishes the offender, and respects the value of human life.

Our position is one not only driven by our faith's profound respect for all human life, from conception to natural death, but by an evaluation of the *realities* of the facts surrounding the imposition of the death penalty. Although a perpetrator of a heinous crime may receive a sentence of death in Connecticut, the possibility that this person will actually be executed is very unlikely. This creates a situation of constant court appeals, year after year, that many families of victims find incredibly painful and frustrating. We also believe that the sentence of lifetime incarceration is a more efficient means to bringing a quick and final punishment to criminals, and quicker closure to the family members of the victims.

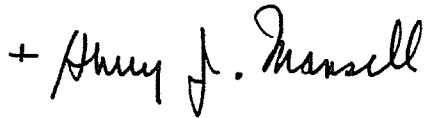
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Several other factors have also been raised during the debate on this issue which, in our view, support the repeal of the current law. First, it is highly questionable that the existence of a death penalty is a deterrent to those who commit a capital crime. Second, the current law has clearly created a situation that is extremely costly to the state, due to unending appeals. And finally, experience shows that the decision to pursue the death penalty in our state is made in an inconsistent and uneven way, depending upon the venue of the case.

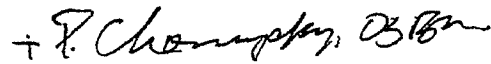
We feel that repealing the death penalty is an improvement over the current situation within our state. This legislation better serves society and, at the same time, punishes the criminal, shortens the sentencing process by eliminating endless appeals, and shows a profound respect for human life.

Again, we ask that you respect the decision of the General Assembly, reconsider your publicly stated position on this bill, and allow H.B. 6578 to become the law of the land in Connecticut.

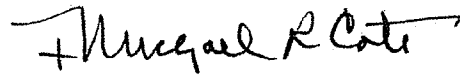
Sincerely,



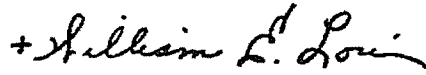
Most Reverend Henry J. Mansell
Archbishop of Hartford



Most Reverend Paul P. Chomnycky
Bishop of Stamford



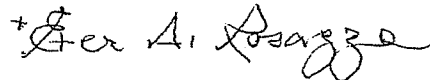
Most Reverend Michael R. Cote
Bishop of Norwich



Most Reverend William E. Lori
Bishop of Bridgeport



Most Reverend Christie A. Macaluso
Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford



Most Reverend Peter A. Rosazza
Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford