

Maryland Law Enforcement Officials for Repeal of the Death Penalty

The undersigned have years of experience as current and former prosecutors and other members of the law enforcement and justice communities. After much deliberation, we have concluded that Maryland's death penalty does not work, wastes precious resources, and should be repealed.

We have served as officers of the law because we wanted to prevent crime, protect citizens, and ensure justice. We represent a variety of political perspectives and likely disagree about many issues. Indeed, some of us support and others of us oppose the death penalty for philosophical and moral reasons. Some of us have sought it as prosecutors and some of us have not. Our experiences have led us to believe that Maryland should replace the death penalty with the swift and severe sentence of life without parole. That punishment did not exist when Maryland enacted its death penalty law, but today it does. Life without parole means that dangerous criminals will *never* be released.

Our state's use of the death penalty over the last two and half decades has proven cumbersome and ineffective.

It is enormously expensive and expends precious resources that could be put to more effective crime-fighting uses, such as putting more police on the streets, so that dangerous criminals are stopped before they prey on others.

In the last three decades, Maryland has sentenced nearly 60 people to death; five have been executed and six people remain on death row. The system rightly requires extra levels of judicial scrutiny of any capital conviction because of the irreversibility of an execution. The result of this important caution, however, is that nearly 100 percent of death sentences in our state are reversed at some point. The inevitable years of appeals, retrials, and resentencings in capital cases prolongs the process, clogging the courts and placing an enormous emotional burden on murder victims' families.

Most importantly, any system administered by human beings is fallible and makes mistakes, even when those of us who labor within that system act with good faith and extreme care. Death is a punishment that is irrevocable, and the risk of executing the wrong person is too great.

We bow to no one in our support for tough law enforcement policies. We believe, however, that tough law enforcement policies must also be smart and effective. After much study and deliberation, we have come to believe that Maryland's death penalty is neither smart nor effective. Nor, because it is necessarily imposed in an inconsistent manner, is it tough.

We believe that the problems of our own state's system are no different than the problems elsewhere; the experience of other states convinces us that any attempt by Maryland to fix these problems would exhaust more of our state's scarce resources, only to fail.

We conclude that the problems plaguing the administration of Maryland's death penalty are too complex and profound to be fixed. For all of these reasons, we have joined together to call for repeal of the death penalty in Maryland and to let it be replaced it with a sentence of life without parole.

Signatories:

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