

Dear Member of the Maryland General Assembly,

As representatives of religious communities of Maryland, we write to underscore strong and mounting support for repeal of death penalty inside and outside the General Assembly. Many Marylanders know that the death penalty is not in the interests of our State, our justice system or the safety of our people.

On March 15, five members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee prevented death penalty repeal from being debated on the floor of the Maryland Senate. Those five votes do not change the considered opposition to capital punishment of Maryland's religious communities.

Nor do those five Senate Committee votes change the reality that:

- Maryland justice is error-prone. Most capital sentences in Maryland are set aside because of problems with their prosecution, trial, and/or evidence. It would have been much cheaper to sentence these prisoners to life without parole in the first place.
- Maryland sometimes convicts the wrong person. Kirk Bloodsworth was convicted twice for a crime we now all know he didn't commit. Threatened with the death penalty, Anthony Gray falsely confessed to a rape and murder in which he played no part. Bernard Webster and Robert Griffin spent years in Maryland prisons for crimes that DNA evidence later showed they did not commit.
- Maryland capital justice is *not* color blind. Nothing can change the fact that the death penalty in Maryland surrenders any claim to be just. A 2003 University of Maryland study concluded that a death sentences in our state is much more likely when the defendant is black and the victim is white.

Maryland doesn't need a death penalty. The death penalty doesn't make any of us safer and violent criminals can be locked up for life. In contrast, the recent closure of Maryland's oldest and most dangerous prison at Jessup is *effective* State action that will dramatically stem recent prisoner violence and make safer correctional staff, and ultimately the public.

The five Senate Committee votes don't even keep Maryland's death penalty active. Presently executions in Maryland are suspended because the protocols governing lethal injections are in violation of the State's Administrative Procedures Act.

We pray that it will take only one more session of the Maryland General Assembly for its supporters realize what so many in Maryland already know: capital punishment is as broken as it is ineffective, and it can't be fixed. In a February 2007 survey, 61% of Maryland voters agreed that a sentence of life without parole is an acceptable substitute for the death penalty. Five Senate Committee votes don't change that majority sentiment.

Sincerely,