

Statement of Lisa Miller Delity
Annapolis; August 19, 2008

Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today.

My name is Lisa Miller Delity. I am a resident of Bowie, and a lifelong resident of the great state of Maryland. I am also very proud to say that yesterday I started my 31st year as a public school teacher in Prince George's County. I teach at Benjamin Tasker Middle School in Bowie.

Two days before Thanksgiving Day, 1994, my brother, Michael John Miller, an FBI Special Agent, and two of his colleagues were murdered in the line of duty. You may remember that tragic event at the Metropolitan Police Headquarters in Washington, D.C. A man carrying a concealed assault pistol opened the door to the room and opened fire, leaving 3 dead and one critically wounded.

I will never forget the events of that horrible day. Nor will I ever forget or get beyond the emotional devastation Mike's death caused and continues to cause my family. I wish I could tell you that survivors' memories of such shocking events fade. Sadly, the grief and shock never goes away.

Since that time and in my brother's honor, I have worked to expose the dangers of gun violence and to gain measures to take illegal guns out of the hands of people, like Mike's murderer, who shouldn't have had access to guns. I am pleased to say that I am joined in this work by members of my family. And, in this room today I am joined by other members of my family.

I am also joined today by other murder victim's family members who, like us, oppose the death penalty. I ask them now to come forward and stand behind me as I read a letter signed by 49 Marylanders who have endured the loss of a family member to murder and who support repeal of our state's capital punishment law.

August 19, 2008

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

We are family members and loved ones of murder victims. We desperately miss the parents, children, siblings, and spouses we have lost. We live with the pain and heartbreak of their absence every day and would do anything to have them back. We have been touched by the criminal justice system in ways we never imagined and would never wish on anyone. Our experience compels us to speak out for change.

We are writing today to ask your support in passing legislation that would replace Maryland's death penalty with life without parole. Though we share different perspectives on the death penalty, every one of us agrees that Maryland's capital punishment system doesn't work for victims' families, and that our state is better off without it.

To be meaningful, justice should be swift and sure. Life without parole, which begins immediately, is both of these; the death penalty is neither. Capital punishment drags victims' loved ones through an agonizing and lengthy process, holding out the promise of one punishment in the beginning and often resulting in a life sentence in the end anyway. A life without parole sentence for killers right from the start would keep society safe, hold killers responsible for their brutal and depraved acts, and would start as soon as we left the courtroom instead of leaving us in limbo.

At the same time, a system of life without parole in place of the death penalty would save scarce funds. As Maryland taxpayers, we have spent millions of dollars and diverted endless hours of court and law enforcement time since capital punishment was reinstated in Maryland. What has it bought us? Years worth of appeals and overturned sentences that have clogged our courts and a system so broken that fixing it is probably impossible - all for what? Five executions that took decades to achieve.

Those resources could be spent in better ways if death-eligible killers were sentenced to life without parole. Maryland could put more police on our streets and provide them with the very best equipment available. Law enforcement programs that work might have prevented the tragedies we suffered at only a fraction of the cost. A legal system that wasn't so bogged down by five men on death row could prosecute and sentence countless other non-death crimes and take dangerous people off the streets before they commit murder. Dollars saved could mean more counseling and aid to children orphaned by these horrible murders, or other services we so desperately need as we attempt to get on with our lives.

Only a handful of arbitrarily selected murderers are sentenced to death. Is it worth the price?

It is vitally important that our state address the needs of surviving family and friends as we struggle to heal. We know that elected officials who promote the death penalty often do so with the best intentions of helping family members like us. We are writing to say that there are better ways to help us. The death penalty is a broken and costly system. Maryland doesn't need it, and victims' families like ours don't want it.

Please vote for repeal of the death penalty.

Kimberly Armstrong-Hughes
Baltimore
lost son, Eric R. Villines

Barbara Arnwine
Upper Marlboro
lost brother, Alan Glenn Arnwine

Ginger Beale
Baltimore
lost son, Harold Robinson, Jr.

Alice Chambers
Annapolis
lost her mother

Sherrie Choporis
lost brother-in-law, James Choporis

Carmel Crilley
Huntingtown
lost husband, Christopher Crilley

Mariah Crilley
Huntingtown
lost father, Christopher Crilley

Marie Ellen Cushing
Baltimore
lost grandfather, Robert Cushing, Sr.

Denise deGuzman
Germantown
lost brother, Jerome Hoy

Lisa Delity
Bowie
lost brother, FBI Special Agent Michael Miller

Kathleen W. Farley
Bowie
lost brother, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Tiffany G. Farley
lost uncle, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Sarah A. Gardner
Hyattsville
lost sister, Nancy B. Gardner

Evelyn V. Gaston
Rockville
lost son, Michael L. Boyd, Sr.

Audrey Hall

Baltimore
lost grandmother, LaTisha Turner

Charles Hall
Baltimore
lost niece, LaTisha Turner

Madeline L. Harrington
Baltimore
lost mother, Emma Louise Coxson

Jean-Marie Johnson
Brookeville
lost uncle, Michael L. Boyd, Sr.

David W. McGee
lost uncle, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Maura McGee
Bowie
lost uncle, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Sally Ransom Knecht
Lutherville
lost husband, Rev. Dr. Lewis F. Ransom

Marian McSherry
Frederick
lost husband, William Clinton McSherry

Dale Miller
Dunkirk
lost father, FBI Special Agent Michael Miller

Mickey Miller
Dunkirk
lost father, FBI Special Agent Michael Miller

Wanda Miller
Dunkirk
lost husband, FBI Special Agent Michael Miller

James O'Brien
St. Michaels
lost daughter, Dierdre O'Brien

Margery Patten

Owings
lost son, Michael Patten

Sylvester J. Schieber
New Market
lost daughter, Shannon Schieber

Vicki Schieber
New Market
lost daughter, Shannon Schieber

Sean J. Schieber
Silver Spring
lost sister, Shannon Schieber

Norbert Schieber
New Market
lost niece, Shannon Schieber

Karen Schneider
Bethesda
lost father, Seymour Schneider

Jeanne K. Snyder
Sandy Spring
lost daughter, Barbara Snyder

Brenda JB Soder
Silver Spring
lost great uncle, Richard Bowser

Bonnita Spikes
Upper Marlboro
lost husband, Michael Spikes

Lisa A. Taylor
New Market
lost brother, Michael Boyd, Sr.

Helen Thomas Keith
Baltimore
lost grandfather, John Thomas, Sr.

Sharon Thompson
Middle River
lost her brother and nephew

Susan W. Tripodi
lost brother, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Antoinette Turner
Baltimore
lost step-daughter, Latisha Turner

Daniel Wells
lost brother, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Mary Wells Shea
lost brother, Msgr. Thomas Wells

Ricardo R. Wiggs
Clinton
lost wife, Sharon Wiggs

Christopher Wilson
Frederick
lost father, Owen D. Wilson

Mary G. Wilson
Frederick
lost father-in-law, Owen D. Wilson

Adrienne Witherspoon
Baltimore
lost common law husband and father to her children, Irvin B. "Nephew" Lawson

Emma Worrell
Baltimore
lost son, Charles

George Worrell
Baltimore
lost brother, Charles

Rhonda Nicole Yakoub
New Carrollton
lost son, Idris Yahoub