



State of New Hampshire

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCORD

34 Swett Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801

May 16, 2018

Governor Christopher Sununu
Governor of New Hampshire
104 North Main Street
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Governor Sununu,

I write to you today to request that you allow SB-593 (abolishing the death penalty in NH) to become the law in New Hampshire.

It is not often that the NH Senate and NH House strongly agree on the passage of a law that many consider controversial. However, the testimony and discussion that I as a House member heard in favor of SB-593 was very compelling. From the Catholic church to law enforcement to victims of capital offenses, all asked us to put morality and humanity before revenge. Still others cited the enormous cost of executing anyone, versus life in prison without parole as reasons to replace our penalty for capital murder with life-in-prison without parole.

We heard for example that our state has not executed anyone for murder since 1939, despite the fact that our state has experienced cases of murder. Apparently, this kind of penalty did not deter people from committing murder. Also, we were told that our only person on death row, Michael Addison, has already caused the State of New Hampshire to spend over \$7 million dollars on his case, while incarceration for life would cost less than \$1 million. In addition, before he can be executed, our state would have to build an execution chamber at an additional cost of ~ \$1 million. Additional complications include obtaining the lethal execution drugs, that companies no longer want to sell, and the services of doctors who do not want to be associated with doing harm.

As a member of Amnesty International since 1971, I have been involved in case work on behalf of victims of human rights violations throughout the world. Besides lobbying for the release from prison of victims of human rights violations, this organization also works worldwide for the abolition of the death penalty. As the result of this involvement, I have learned a lot about the death penalty and how it is applied worldwide. One consistent factor is that in most parts of the world the death penalty is used to persecute the political opposition, or certain ethnic or religious groups, and rarely for criminal activity as we know it and applied in a very discriminatory way. According to this organization, during 2016 the US recorded the lowest number of death sentences (32) since 1973, and the lowest number of executions (20) since 1991. Only five states in the country executed anyone in 2016.

You have a historic opportunity to end this practice in New Hampshire and replace it with life-in-prison, which will protect the public from dangerous criminals and will never accidentally execute an innocent person. Depending on your own conscience, you can decide to go along with the will of NH residents as expressed by vote of the legislature, or you can allow the law to go into effect without your signature.

I would respectfully ask you to support abolishing the death penalty in New Hampshire.

Peter Somssich
State Representatives / District 27 Portsmouth

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Somssich".