



October 11, 2023

Dear Senator/Representative,

As the Catholic bishops of Ohio, we urge your support for legislation to abolish the death penalty. The Catholic opposition to the death penalty is rooted in mercy and eminently pro-life. Every human life from its very beginning has inherent worth and dignity that is bestowed by God, the Author and Lord of life. Following this truth, Catholics in Ohio and nationwide have sought, for decades, the full protection of the law for human life from conception to natural death, no matter the circumstances or one's stage of development.

The bishops who preceded us in Ohio first wrote in opposition to the death penalty 45 years ago in 1977. Since then, Catholic bishops worldwide and three popes have stated emphatically that a society should not carry out state-sanctioned executions in the name of just punishment. We continue to inform Catholics in our respective dioceses of the Church's position on the death penalty and encourage them to share this teaching with their neighbors.

The Church recognizes the immense harm a crime causes to victims, their family members, and society, especially the taking of human life. We stand in solidarity with victims' families experiencing tremendous suffering and often questioning what sort of justice could atone for actions that took the life of their loved ones. Such actions necessitate correction and conversion from the perpetrator and restoration of the damage caused to the public order. However, the irrevocable termination of God's gift of human life through the death penalty distorts justice. No execution can bring back a life taken by violence and thus can never satisfy the desire of the victim's family for justice.

While societal self-defense is an appropriate aim, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, "...more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens but, at the same time, do not definitively deprive the guilty of the possibility of redemption." We can look to St. Paul's famous conversion and countless examples of prison inmates finding redemption and living a new life dedicated to God and fellow inmates. A state-sanctioned execution represents a judgment from fallible human beings that an individual no longer deserves to live, no longer deserves an opportunity to encounter the living God on earth.

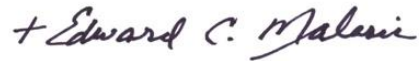
Our desire to help foster a culture of life throughout Ohio requires a commitment to recognizing the sanctity of human life in all stages and circumstances, including the child in the womb, the infirm, those suffering from addiction, and those with whom we have the fiercest disagreements. It must also include those who, at one time, blatantly disregarded the humanity of others and need to face justice. As witnesses to the power of God's redeeming love to convert hearts and transform lives, we grieve that the State of Ohio can still decide to definitively cut off that opportunity by taking the life of someone already incarcerated. Such action further erodes respect for human life and will not help stem the devastating violence all too common in Ohio and throughout our country.

Please join us in upholding the inherent dignity and sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death by supporting legislation that abolishes the death penalty. It is time for Ohio to end this practice and ensure our laws respect life without exception.

We thank you for your service to Ohio and keep you in our prayers.



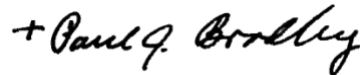
The Most Rev. Dennis M. Schnurr  
Archdiocese of Cincinnati



The Most Rev. Edward C. Malesic  
Diocese of Cleveland



The Most Rev. David J. Bonnar  
Diocese of Youngstown



The Most Rev. Paul J. Bradley  
Diocese of Steubenville



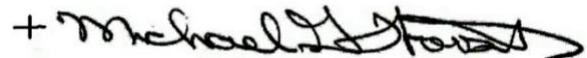
The Most Rev. John Michael Botean  
St. George Byzantine Catholic Diocese



The Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas  
Diocese of Toledo



The Most Rev. Bohdan J. Danylo  
Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of  
St. Josaphat in Parma



The Most Rev. Michael Woost  
Diocese of Cleveland



The Most Rev. Earl K. Fernandes  
Diocese of Columbus