

DELAWARE COALITION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

June 10, 2024

To: Members of the Delaware House of Representatives

From: Delaware Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

Re: HB 70 & HB 301

Dear Members of the Delaware House of Representatives,

The Delaware Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty writes to respectfully urge you to prioritize HB 70 and HB 301 this session and bring this important legislation to the floor of the House for a favorable vote. We are a coalition of organizations and faith communities whose membership live and vote in each of your districts. There is broad, bi-partisan support for abolishing the death penalty in Delaware. This is not a Democrat vs. Republican issue. This is not a conservative vs. progressive issue. Ending the death penalty in Delaware, once and for all, is smart policy that is supported by an overwhelming majority of Delaware voters of all stripes.

There is no evidence that the death penalty acts as a deterrent to those who might consider committing murder or some other violent crime. There is, however, strong evidence that the death penalty has been applied in a racist manner in Delaware. Chasing death sentences is an enormous waste of our state's limited criminal justice resources. The fact that there have been nearly 200 exonerations of people sentenced to death in the United States over the last 50 years leaves us fearful that we will execute an innocent person, if we haven't done so already. But even if we knew that the death penalty was a deterrent to some murderers that could be administered fairly, cost-effectively and without error, we would still urge you to abolish its use here in Delaware. We simply cannot support a policy that seeks to kill people to punish them for killing. It makes no sense. We are teaching our children that an act of violence is the only solution to a social problem, and that is wrong.

We urge you to bring these two important bills to the floor for a vote in the House as soon as possible. The time is now to end state-sponsored killing in the name of justice here in Delaware. Abolish the death penalty, once and for all.

Respectfully,

The undersigned members of the Delaware Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty

DELAWARE COALITION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

Delaware Organizations

- ACLU of Delaware
- Amnesty International Members of Delaware
- Becoming Beloved Community Ministry, St. Martha's Episcopal Church
- Becoming Beloved Community Ministry, St Barnabas Episcopal Church
- Black Mothers in Power
- Campaign to End Debtors' Prison
- Catholic Diocese of Wilmington
- Coleman Memorial United Methodist Church
- Civic League for New Castle County
- Death Penalty Action
- Delaware Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
- Delaware CAN
- Delaware Center For Justice
- Delaware Citizens Opposed to the Death Penalty
- Delaware Democratic Socialists of America
- Delawareans for Palestinian Human Rights
- Delaware Poor People's Campaign
- Delaware Racial Justice Collaborative
- Epworth United Methodist Church
- Grace United Methodist Church
- Humbly Assisting Humanity
- Innocence Project Delaware
- League of Woman Voters of Delaware
- Methodist Action Program
- Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
- NAACP Delaware State Conference
- Network Delaware
- Newark United Methodist Church
- Non-Partisan Delaware
- Office of Defense Services
- Partners for Justice
- Progressive Democrats of Sussex County
- The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission of the Episcopal Church in Delaware
- Riverfront United Methodist Church
- Skyline United Methodist Church
- The Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice
- Summit United Methodist Church
- Unitarian Universalists of Central Delaware
- Unitarian Universalists Delaware Advocacy Network
- Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark Social Justice Team
- Unitarian Universalist Society of Mill Creek
- Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware
- Wesley United Methodist Church
- Working Families Party
- YWCA

Delaware Faith Leaders

- Rev. Joseph Archie, III, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church – Dover
- Charline Adams Baker, Church Council Chair, Asbury United Methodist Church – Seaford
- Rev. Kevin Benjamin, Newark United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Cornelius Berry, M.Div., Zion–Mount Carmel United Methodist Church – Wilmington
- Rev. Mary Browne, Ebenezer United Methodist Church – Newark
- Dawn Buckworth, St. Paul's United Methodist Church – Odessa
- Rev. Ayliah Cannon, Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Newark – Newark
- Junior Warden Catherine Dean, Trinity Episcopal Church – Wilmington
- Pastor Adrienne Dillard, Newark United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Dr. Lyle J. Dykstra, Retired Presbyterian Pastor
- Bishop Rev. Dr. LaTrelle Easterling, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church – Dover
- Pastor Rev. Carmella Evans, Tree of Life Church

DELAWARE COALITION TO ABOLISH THE DEATH PENALTY

- Rev. Dr. Vicki Gordy-Stith, Epworth United Methodist Church – Rehoboth Beach
- Rev. Patrick Boman Gordy-Stith, Epworth United Methodist Church – Rehoboth Beach
- Dir. Donna Hitchner, Methodist Action Program – Wilmington
- Rev. John Hornberger, Kingswood United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Casey Houtz, Ewell’s–St. Paul United Methodist Church – Clayton
- Rev. Dave Ingalls, Grace United Methodist Church – Wilmington
- Rev. Grant Johnson, Immanuel United Methodist Church – Townsend
- Rev. Pearl Johnson, Simpson United Methodist Church – Wilmington
- Rev. Dr. Gregory Knox Jones, Westminster Presbyterian Church – Wilmington
- Rev. Donna Jean Kiessling, St. Peter’s Episcopal Church – Smyrna
- Lay Leader Sharon Kimmel, New Castle United Methodist Church – New Castle
- Sheridan Kingsberry, Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission in the Episcopal Church in Delaware
- Bishop William E. Koenig, Catholic Dioceses of Wilmington – Wilmington
- Rev. Dr. Karl R. Kraft, Kenton United Methodist Church – Kenton
- Rev. Jacob Macklin, St. Matthew’s By-The-Sea United Methodist Church – Fenwick Island
- Rev. Theodore E. Olson, Episcopal Church in Delaware – Millsboro
- Rev. Dr. David Palmer, Newark United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Lee Andrea Parks, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church – Milton
- Rev. Tom Pasmore, Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church – Dover
- Marlene Quinn, Moderator, New Castle Presbytery, P.C.U.S.A. – New Castle
- Rabbi Yair D. Robinson, Congregation Beth Emeth – Wilmington
- Rev. Kevin Smith, Deacon, Newark United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Dr. Richard Speck, Unitarian Universalist Minister – Wilmington
- Rev. Chelsea Spyres, Riverfront Ministries – Wilmington
- Rev. Heather Rion Starr, Unitarian Universalists of Southern Delaware – Lewes
- Chair Becky Varlas, Social Justice Committee at Unitarian Universalists Society of Mill Creek – Newark
- Kathleen C. Werrell, Church Council, Newark United Methodist Church – Newark
- Rev. Amy Yarnall, Wesley United Methodist Church – Dover