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MOST REVEREND W. FRANCIS MALOOLY, DD
BISHOP OF WILMINGTON

May 3, 2017

Dear Members of the 149th Delaware General Assembly:

On April 4, legislation which would effectively reinstate the death penalty in the State of Delaware was introduced. **House Bill 125**, the *Extreme Crimes Prevention Act*, would amend Delaware's death penalty statute to remedy a technical defect which currently renders it unconstitutional under the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

As I remarked in my March 20, 2015 letter in support of death penalty repeal, capital punishment is a morally complex issue. On the one hand, terrible crimes such as the murders of Sgt. Steven Floyd and Cpl. Stephen Ballard, cry out for the ultimate penalty. But on the other hand, the clear message to all in the Gospel is one of mercy, reconciliation, rehabilitation and charity to all, without exception. As horrendous as these crimes are, and no matter how they shock the conscience, we are nonetheless called to respect human life in all of its forms and conditions. Upholding the dignity of all life in no way exonerates those who commit such heinous acts, nor does it diminish the resulting pain, agony and grief felt by loved ones and the entire community.

The Church affirms the right to self-defense and society's right to protect itself from unjust aggressors such as murderers, rapists, terrorists, and the like. The right and obligation of governments to protect lives against existential threats is not in question. The true question at the heart of this issue is whether or not the death penalty is a just and necessary method of punishment.

Pope Francis has called for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty, saying "It is impossible to imagine that states today cannot make use of another means than capital punishment to defend peoples' lives from an unjust aggressor." Prison provides an effective alternative to the death penalty by removing the serious offender from society and allowing an opportunity for repentance, reformation and reconciliation.

There are many challenges which face our society and many factors which contribute to the violence and criminal behavior which plagues us, such as poverty, discrimination, injustice, family breakdown, a lack of hope and a lack of opportunity. These problems are not remedied by the death penalty.

There is a growing consciousness in our society that the death penalty does not solve or discourage violent crime. The fundamental principle that life is precious, every life, and that it is an inalienable right, is something that must be encouraged, especially by the state.

Respectfully yours,

Most Reverend W. Francis Malooly
Bishop of Wilmington