

HEARING ON HB 2167 TO REPEAL THE DEATH PENALTY
House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee
February 13, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 2167
Submitted by Rev. Joanna Harader, Peace Mennonite Church, Lawrence, KS

Dear Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee:

My name is Joanna Harader and I serve as pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, KS. I am writing to express my support of HB 2167, a bill that would repeal the death penalty in Kansas and replace it with a sentence of life without parole.

As a Christian, I believe that each person is created in the image of God, and that it is God who gives and takes life. For the state to take on the role of executioner is a grave sin. No human being is beyond the reach of God's transforming love and grace.

I also affirm the biblical call to justice for all people, and I know that the death penalty has been shown to be applied in an unjust manner. Various studies have shown that poor people and people of color are much more likely to receive a sentence of death than are their wealthier, whiter counterparts. Because of this inequality of sentencing, we cannot continue to allow death to be one of the available sentences.

My opposition to the death penalty also emerges out of pastoral concern for the family and friends of murder victims. The lengthy appeals process often forces people to re-live the tragic death of their loved one over and over again. And in the end, if the accused is executed, the hoped-for closure rarely comes.

Finally, as a person of faith, I believe that we, as a society, can hold ourselves to a higher ethical standard. The people of Kansas do not have to resort to the same violence that criminals perpetrate on their victims. We do not have to lash out with an eye for an eye. We can do better. We can work towards restoration rather than retribution. We can affirm the sanctity of life against the forces of death in our culture.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this very important issue. I appreciate your service to the people of Kansas.

Sincerely,
Rev. Joanna Harader, Peace Mennonite Church

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