

Julia Rodriguez  
Testimony against the Death Penalty  
May 2018

Governor Sununu:

My name is Julia Rodriguez and I live in Durham. My testimony on the death penalty is offered as the sister of a crime victim.

I hope my story helps convince you that not all crime victims support the death penalty. In fact, the prospect of state-sanctioned execution exacerbates our pain. At the very least, capital punishment will not bring our loved ones back; at worst, it perpetuates a culture of violence and retribution in when we all are morally and emotionally diminished.



It is also my hope that my testimony will convince you to sign and ratify SB593. It is time for New Hampshire to join the civilized world in rejecting capital punishment.

On September 11, 2001, I left my house around 8:45 to drive my son to Kindergarten at the Child Study and Development Center at UNH.

I arrived in his classroom to the sight of parents huddled worriedly, talking in hushed tones about how a plane had just hit the World Trade Center.

Upon hearing those words, I went instantly into panic mode. My brother Greg, 31 years old, worked near the top of the North Tower. I knew he had just returned the day before from a week's vacation. He was most likely in the building.

We lost Greg that day. He was my only sibling. The shock of his death, amplified by the larger events of 9/11, changed me and my family forever. My parents lost their only son; his wife of one year, Elizabeth, lost her husband; my grandparents had to outlive their only grandson; I lost my brother; my son lost his uncle; and, most unbelievable to me, my two daughters, born in 2002 and 2006, would never meet him.

Like many survivors of murdered loved ones, my family has sought healing on the personal level, and justice on the societal level. We have closely followed the

investigations and criminal proceedings regarding 9/11, and have on occasion called for justice for the victims and their survivors.

What is justice in the face of homicide? For me, it is understanding how it happened and holding the perpetrators accountable for their criminal acts. It is removing the guilty parties from society so they cannot harm again. It is creating laws that try to prevent such acts from happening to other people.

However, justice cannot be reached by killing in turn. Two wrongs do not make a right. As Mahatma Gandhi said, "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind."

While I have felt endless grief for my brother, and sought justice, my feelings have never translated into a desire for vengeance or retribution. I do not want to live in a society with state-sanctioned executions. Imagining its application does not help my pain or bring closure, but in fact intensifies it.

Luckily, we have an alternative: Senate Bill 593, that would change the penalty for capital murder to life imprisonment without possibility of parole.

Despite the fact that New Hampshire has not executed anyone since 1939, this antiquated practice is still on the books. It's time to codify our instinctual human aversion to the act of killing by enacting SB593.

Even if you don't agree with my principled stand against state executions, there are practical reasons to eliminate it. Capital punishment proceedings, always on shaky constitutional grounds, are lengthy and expensive. They drain precious criminal justice dollars and drag out trials, both of which prolong the pain of victims.

It's time for New Hampshire to abolish the death penalty. Right now, we have the opportunity to join our neighbors Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, CT, and RI, along with 14 other states, all of whom already have.

You can join the moral leaders on this issue right now, by signing SB 593. The people of New Hampshire have an opportunity to take a stand for genuine justice by finally repealing the death penalty. That's the kind of state I want to live in.

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