



Testimony
SB 5015 – Death Penalty – Aggravated Conditions – 14 Years
Senate Law & Justice Committee
January 23, 2013

Senator Padden and members of the Committee, my name is Mark Miloscia. I am here this afternoon on behalf of the Washington State Catholic Conference, which represents the Catholic Bishops of Washington State on issues of public policy. I am grateful to you for this opportunity to speak on SB 5015. The Catholic Conference, respectfully, does not support legislation that would expand the use of the death penalty.

Catholics believe that all human life is sacred from conception to natural death. The dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Direct attacks on innocent persons are never morally acceptable.

The Catholic Bishops of this state have long been on record as opposing capital punishment. At the same time, they have also been very clear in expressing their deep concern for the families and friends of victims of violent crimes, and in their commitment to helping them to heal. They also have spoken of the right of all citizens to be protected from perpetrators of violent crimes.

In framing their opposition to the death penalty, the bishops state: *"First and foremost our pastoral responsibilities call us to comfort and care for victims' families, friends and loved ones in response to the crime of murder. In keeping with our call as disciples of Jesus, we bishops have committed the pastoral resources of our parish communities to care for those who have been deprived of the life of a loved one by an act of violence. We reaffirm our commitment to console these secondary victims of murder. We also join our voices with all other citizens in the demand that all of us be protected from those who would commit murder."*

Murder and other violent crimes cry out for an appropriate punishment, but the death penalty merely adds violence to violence, an "eye for an eye" and perpetuates the illusion that the taking of one human life for another can somehow balance the scales of justice. In addressing the appropriate level of punishment the Bishops acknowledge that in some cases, life imprisonment without the possibility of parole is an appropriate sentence.

Thank you for your consideration.