

PUBLIC POLICY BRIEFS

SISTERS *of* CHARITY HEALTH SYSTEM



Federal Death Penalty Abolition Act of 2021

Issue Overview

There has always been conflict over the notion of the death penalty. Advocates against the death penalty have worked hard to share stories and information that elevate the many concerns with exercising the death penalty. Efforts like The Innocence Project share the real-life stories of people falsely condemned, and the failure of the system to protect life. There are individuals who believe that the death penalty should be abolished because of their beliefs that any person, including the government, does not have the right to take away the life of another person. Alternatively, there are proponents of the death penalty who believe it is a critical tool to deter severe acts of criminal behavior. However, there is no evidence that the death penalty is any more effective at deterring crime than life imprisonment. The death penalty is discriminatory towards people of lower socioeconomic status, along with racial and ethnic minorities.

At the end of 2020 in the United States, there were 2,485 people on death row in different states. There were 17 recorded executions in the United States in 2020.

The House of Representatives has set a bill in motion regarding the abolition of the death penalty for federal crimes. The details of that bill are outlined below.

House of Representatives Bill H.R. 97

Federal Death Penalty Abolition Act of 2021

This bill prohibits the imposition of a death penalty sentence for a violation of federal law. This bill also eliminates statutory authority for the death penalty as a sentencing option for federal offences. Finally, this bill would require that any person who was sentenced to death before the enactment of the bill must be resentenced.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would abolish the death penalty under federal law • This would also allow people who were sentenced to the death penalty another chance to reclaim their lives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This bill only eliminates the death penalty at the federal level, ultimately states would have the choice on whether to execute someone for a crime involving a non-federal law

Current Status

This bill was introduced by the House of Representatives on January 4, 2021. The bill is waiting further approval.

What does this mean for us at The Sisters of Charity Health System?

Because of our Catholic identity, we advocate for the abolition of the death penalty. Morally, nobody should have the power to take away life other than God because God is the only one who appoints life. We believe in the dignity of human life, and we fight to protect this dignity in every instance. We understand that our criminal justice system is biased and we stand in solidarity with those who it is biased against. We recognize the sacredness of human life and that every person has a fundamental right to life and human decency.

What does this mean for you, your family, or your community?

Everyone deserves a criminal justice system that is sensible and effective at creating a safe society. The abolishment of the death penalty would allow our society to focus more time, energy and resources on supporting the victims harmed by violence and making our communities safer.