



THE FALSE PROMISE HOW THE DEATH PENALTY **FAILS** VICTIMS' FAMILIES

To be meaningful, justice should be fair, accurate, and healing for crime survivors and their families. The death penalty is none of those things. Capital punishment **prolongs pain for victims' families, dragging them through an agonizing and lengthy process** that holds out the false promise of healing through an execution - often resulting in a different sentence in the end.

A PAINFUL PROCESS

- In Ohio, people on death row serve an average of 17 years and two months, before execution. This long process is traumatizing for victims' families, both because of the added time and stress that accompany capital cases and the high profile nature of these cases.
- Without the death penalty in the mix, the healing process can begin sooner and families can grieve in private, outside the spotlight of news cameras.

THE DEATH PENALTY IGNORES THE REAL NEEDS OF SURVIVING FAMILIES

- The death penalty's cumbersome and expensive process diverts millions of dollars and attention from the critical services that victim's family members need to help them heal, including specialized grief counseling, financial assistance, and ongoing support. The few services that are available are often provided through the prosecutor's office, and when the criminal case is over, the services for the victim's family members end, too.
- **In 2018 the Ohio's victim compensation fund provided economic assistance to just 3.23% of the applications it accepted. Ohio ranks 46th out of the 50 states and District of Columbia.**

"Instead of spending millions on death penalty trials and decades of appeals, we should be investing in tools to reduce, prevent and solve crimes. If we care about victims' families like mine, we should be prioritizing services that benefit all of us, instead of pouring millions into an arbitrarily applied death penalty."

- JONATHAN MANN

THE DEATH PENALTY DIVIDES FAMILIES WHEN THEY NEED EACH OTHER MOST

- The death penalty has split families apart, forcing relatives with different perspectives on the issue to engage in a polarizing debate at the time when they need each other most.
- In cases where the defendant and victim are related, families are even further torn apart. In a number of cases, for example, children must first cope with the murder of one parent and then suffer retraumatization when the other parent is executed for the crime.

CAN WE MAKE THE SYSTEM FASTER OR LESS STRESSFUL?

- The death penalty is the nation's only irreversible punishment. The process is longer because a life is on the line. Many of the extra procedures are legally mandated to reduce the risk of executing an innocent person.
- Even these safeguards are not enough – at least 185 people have been exonerated from death row after waiting years or decades for the truth to come out. Streamlining the process would virtually guarantee the execution of an innocent person, which we know has happened before.
- For every **five executions in Ohio, the state has exonerated one person.**
- Nationally, that number is **one in eight.**

“My family could have used counseling and other kinds of support instead, which I believe would have helped our recovery and grief. Trained, certified, qualified mental health professionals must be available to any family experiencing homicide. They should be available to all, without disparity of access based on race, economics, geography, or prior unrelated encounters with law enforcement.”

- LASHAWN AJAMU
