



Murphy Initiative for Justice and Peace

P. Francis Murphy Justice/Peace Initiative, Inc.

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16 February 2007

Honorable Martin J. O'Malley
Governor of Maryland
State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1925

Dear Governor O'Malley:

We extend our congratulations to you as you assume the responsibilities of the 61st Governor of Maryland. Be assured of our prayers as you exercise this critical office.

The Murphy Initiative for Justice and Peace is a coalition of thirteen religious orders dedicated to becoming a common voice for justice and peace in the region. Our member communities are engaged in and operate an array of social ministries across the State of Maryland, ranging from schools to universities, health care institutions to community health clinics, child and family services to homeless shelters, from prison chaplaincies to halfway houses. In all of this, they are guided by an unswerving principle of respect for the dignity of the human person and a vision of a more just and sustainable society.

The purpose of this letter is to seek your leadership in bringing an end to the practice of state-sanctioned execution, or capital punishment, in Maryland. Following the December Court of Appeals ruling over procedures for administering lethal injections – resulting in a *de facto* halt to state execution – a broad public consensus has emerged that the death penalty system in Maryland is broken beyond repair. A number of states, including our neighbor New Jersey, have or are considering its abolition. And many religious institutions have argued compelling moral reasons to abandon capital punishment altogether. Reflecting international concern, at the end of January, the new U.N. Secretary General put his support behind an initiative led by Italy calling for a worldwide moratorium on the death penalty.

Our membership wholeheartedly embraces and supports the abolition of the death penalty. At the same time, we hold the view that society has a right to be protected – and a right to believe that we are protected – from violent crime. Therefore, the issue of capital punishment ought not be examined and decided as if it were in isolation from other closely related issues of public safety and security, namely, enacting and enforcing meaningful gun control; comprehensive reform of the criminal justice system; a rebalancing of the exercise of justice from a retributive emphasis (pre-occupation with punishment of the offender) to a restorative justice emphasis (repairing harm done to the victim); and re-prioritizing rehabilitation as an objective of imprisonment.

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Becoming a common voice for justice and peace

