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To: Members of the Connecticut General Assembly

From: Daughters of the Holy Spirit, Leadership Team; Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Leadership Team; Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, Leadership Team; Sisters of St. Joseph of Chambery, Leadership Team; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Northeast, Leadership Team; Connecticut Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Leadership Team

Re: Abolition of the Death Penalty in Connecticut

Date: February 28, 2012

We, the undersigned, are the leadership teams of the six religious congregations who sponsor The Collaborative Center for Justice in Hartford, Connecticut. As women in leadership, we represent almost 1,000 Sisters and Associates, who are members of our respective religious communities. As women religious, we are committed to working on social justice issues that affect the poor, the marginalized and the victimized in Connecticut. It is this commitment to the issues of social justice, and a firm belief in the sacredness of all life from birth to natural death, which compels us to write and sign this letter urging you, our State legislators, to repeal the death penalty in Connecticut.

As the death penalty is presented this legislative session, we ask that you look objectively at this issue of state sanctioned execution, and to question the commonly held argument in support of the death penalty, i.e., the death penalty is a deterrent to violent crime, with the considerations being proposed by those who would abolish the death penalty, i.e., the disproportionate manner in which the death penalty is imposed; the inherent violence connected with the act of execution; the psychological trauma experienced by the victim's families as they endure the trial and countless appeals connected to the judicial process; innocent individuals are convicted and sentenced to death; and finally, the legal cost, absorbed by the State, to prosecute and defend during the appeals process.

We are especially concerned for the families who are deprived of the opportunity to begin the grieving and healing process, so necessary if they are to move on with their lives. To help these families, we urge you, our legislators, to divest yourselves of the emotions that cloud the issue surrounding the death penalty, and discuss rationally this law, which allows the State of Connecticut to execute a human being. In place of the death penalty, we support a judicial policy of life in prison without the possibility of parole. Such a policy would satisfy the demand for justice, and be devoid of the element of revenge.

We add our voices, and those of our membership, to the voices you have already heard asking you to consider abolishing the death penalty in Connecticut. This issue has too long been part of our State's legislative agenda; it is time to abolish the death penalty and join the other States who have had the courage to do so.