



STATEMENT OF THE DLSZ HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COORDINATING COUNCIL ON THE PROPOSED REIMPOSITION OF DEATH PENALTY

The DLSZ High School Student Representative Coordinating Council is strongly ***AGAINST*** the implementation of House Bill 4727 due to the following reasons:

It is anti-poor.

The ones living in poverty are more affected by this law since they are primarily prosecuted in the war on drugs. These people have no means to defend themselves and to avail of a fair trial. Most are also victimized by syndicates; they often feel that they have to succumb to this business due to their economic situation. This further aggravates the inequality in our country.

It invites abuse and exploitation in our already flawed justice system.

Crime and corruption have been rampant in our society because of the justice system which has not been working properly. According to Atty. Jose Manuel Diokno during the One La Salle Reflection on Human Rights, some evidences of such claim include shoddy police work and poor conviction rates (18-20%), shockingly low time served (10%), excruciatingly slow pace of litigation (6-10 years), congested court dockets (50 cases per day on the average), strong perception of widespread corruption (40% among lawyers), and high vacancy rates (25%) for trial judges and public prosecutors). This law could easily be taken advantage of especially by people with personal and political motives.

It violates human rights.

Our constitution and the United Nations general assemblies on the Second Optional Protocol award everybody the equal right to life. The reimposition of death penalty violates the international agreement that the Philippines signed with the United Nations indicating that we would not be imposing capital punishment, as this has no place in the 21st century.

It promulgates a fear-driven society.

This puts our country in an atmosphere of fear rather than respect for the law and for the government. This also makes the act of killing the norm; young people would grow up in a country where killing is perceived as a justifiable punishment for committing faults. This creates a society that obeys out of fear.

There are plenty of other alternatives which are more effective, humane, and focused on the rehabilitation of offenders.

Instead of over-criminalizing these alleged offenders, the government and its police force should provide them proper treatment and rehabilitation. Drug dependency should not be seen as a mere criminal action but is also a chronic illness. Imposing the death penalty will not address the root of the problem, but rather the effects. We should find a preventive solution, not a curative one. We should focus on alleviating poverty, bridging the gap between social classes, providing the people with the right education, and lessening the demand for drugs in the industry.

Based on the previous implementation of death penalty in the Philippines, especially during the term of former President Fidel V. Ramos, we simply cannot determine if reintroducing the death penalty would consistently and effectively lower the rate of crime. Thus, the government is taking an enormous risk and is once again, putting the citizens, whose lives they are supposed to be protecting, under the threat and fear, more so under a corrupt legal and judiciary system, with the poor being the most at risk and the most affected by this decision.

As members of the Catholic community guided by the Lasallian Core Values, we strongly oppose the implementation of House Bill 4727 and its implications against the society's right to life. We simply cannot stay silent in these difficult times wherein our country is most desperate for help. We are deeply moved by those whose voices are not heard. We therefore stand firm in our opposition for the sake of our country and our community. De La Salle Santiago Zobel School urges the present government to realize the importance of life and its protection and to renew society on the basis of love and restorative justice. As Lasallians, we continue to fight for our wounded society misled by the illusion that one must take life in order to defend it.

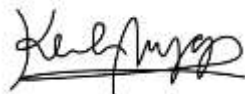
Signed during the Prayer Walk and Noise for Life held at De La Salle Santiago Zobel School, University Avenue, Ayala Alabang Village, Muntinlupa City on March 8, 2017.



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