

## HEARING ON HB 2167 TO REPEAL THE DEATH PENALTY

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

February 13, 2017

Testimony in Support of HB 2167 Submitted by Michael Birzer

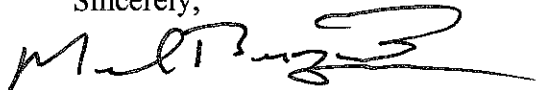
My name is Michael Birzer and I am a Professor of Criminal Justice and Director of the School of Community Affairs at Wichita State University. I write to you today as a proponent of HB 2167 which calls for the repeal the death penalty.

As a criminologist, I am familiar with the research illuminating the many problems capital punishment presents. Many years of methodological sound studies inform us that the death penalty is not a deterrent to crime. Likewise, many studies shed light on the host of problems centering on the death penalty. In part, these problems center on the substantial cost of the death penalty, disparities in who gets sentenced to death, and the possibility of an innocent person being sentenced and put to death. Polls also reveal that public support of the death penalty has been waning in recent years.

Please do not construe my written testimony as advocating for a soft approach on crime for those convicted of heinous crimes. I have been an academic for some 17 years now, however, prior to entry into teaching and research I served over 18 years with the Sedgwick County Sheriff's Department in Wichita. During my 18 year law enforcement career I saw firsthand the devastating effects of crime and disorder. I saw the victims of crime who had been beaten, brutalized and murdered. I dealt with the most hardened criminals. Moreover, there is not a day that goes by that I don't think about four fellow officers that I worked with that made the ultimate sacrifice - killed in the line of duty. I believe that my law enforcement experience along with my academic training has given me a unique view of crime, criminals, and the criminal justice system. After 18 years of service as a law enforcement officer, and over 17 years as an academic studying crime and criminal justice, I have come to the conclusion that the death penalty is not a meaningful solution to crime. There is simply too much evidence suggesting it has too many complex problems.

Repealing the death penalty in Kansas would potentially save a significant amount of taxpayer money. Perhaps the money saved could be used to invest in evidence based criminal justice practices along with programs aimed at reducing recidivism, and enhancing crime fighting resources for the law enforcement community.

Sincerely,



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