

# FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

201 WEST PARK AVENUE  
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301-7715

PHONE (850) 205-6820  
FAX (850) 205-6849  
WWW.FLACCB.ORG

MICHAEL B. SHEEDY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



March 12, 2025

The Hon. Jeff Holcomb  
315 House Office Building  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

***Re: Opposition to HB 653***

Dear Representative Holcomb:

We write to express our opposition to HB 653 that would add the aggravating factor that "the capital felony was committed against the head of a state...or in an attempt to commit such crime...was committed against another individual" to those considered by juries in sentencing for capital crimes.

We naturally concur that assassination is a grave evil. We affirm also that the government has a duty to prevent such crimes, to punish the offender, and to protect the public.

Nevertheless, there are strong reasons to conclude that killing the offender is not a just solution. The dignity of the perpetrator is not lost even after the commission of the most serious crimes. Society is protected and those who commit capital crimes are severely punished through the alternative sentence of life without parole.

On the question of deterrence, when in so many awful cases the perpetrator is deeply disturbed, it is doubtful that the death penalty will have any deterrent effect at all. For those few in a state of mind to calculate such things, the loss of freedom for the rest of their lives is already a deterrent.

As is increasingly recognized, seeking death is costlier to taxpayers than a life sentence without parole because of trial costs and the necessary appeals before the state can deprive someone of life. Further, where the death penalty has been handed down, it often delays reaching a sense of closure for the families and friends of victims of these heinous crimes as appeals wear on.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about these concerns. Thank you for your generous service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michael" being the most prominent part.

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Most Rev. Thomas G. Wenski, Archbishop of Miami and FCCB President