SENATE JUDICIARY
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE 2/4/09
BILL NO. SB236

My name is Carolyn Mad Plume, and I am from Heart Butte, Montana

Dear Members of the Senate Committee,

I would like to start by asking all those family members of murder victims who oppose the death penalty here today to please stand. [Pause...everyone sits]

My daughter was murdered four years and one day ago. I oppose the death penalty, and as you can see, I am not alone.

I am here today to ask you to support Senate Bill 236, which would replace Montana's death penalty with a sentence of life without parole. Montana's capital punishment system does not work for victims' families, and our state is better off without it.

True justice for families would be life without parole, which begins immediately. Capital punishment makes people go through a very long process that holds out the promise of one punishment in the beginning but often ends in a life sentence anyway. A life without parole sentence right from the start would keep society safe, hold killers responsible for their actions, and would start as soon as we left the courtroom.

A system of life without parole in place of the death penalty would save money. In Montana, we have spent way too much of taxpayers' money and spent way too many hours of court and law enforcement time on our capital punishment system. What has it bought us? Years worth of appeals, overturned sentences, and a system so broken that fixing it is probably impossible - all for what? Only three executions in over 30 years.

Those resources could be spent in better ways. Law enforcement programs that work might have prevented the tragedies we suffered at a much lower cost. A legal system free from the resource drain of the capital punishment system could find,

prosecute, and sentence other criminals and even take dangerous people off the streets before they commit murder. We could use the money we saved for counseling for children orphaned by these horrible murders, or provide other services we need as we attempt to get on with our lives.

It is important that our state help surviving family and friends as we struggle to heal. I believe that lawmakers often believe in the death penalty because they want to help family members like me. But there are better ways to help us. The death penalty is a broken system. Montana doesn't need it, and victims' families like mine don't want it.