

February 11, 2013

House Judiciary Committee:

I stand before you in support of HB 370.

Beyond the arguments for cost-effectiveness and the possibility of executing an innocent, I ask you to consider the families of the convicted. I come before you as the daughter of someone many of you would call "murderer."

My father was convicted of child abuse and manslaughter when I was a toddler. My fractured bones, bruises, and burns have long since healed. The scars from that abuse are still on my face for those who look closely enough. The half sister I would have had is still dead.

While he was in prison, I watched his parents and grandparents miss him. I saw the letters his siblings wrote, the empty chair at Christmas dinner, the pain they felt. I can only imagine the enormous loss and pain that family would have felt had the state executed my father.

Years after my father was released from prison, I sat down with him, and we talked about what he had done. We wept together over the years of healing, therapy, and rehabilitation both of us had gone through to reach that point of forgiveness. We now have a good relationship, and I learn much from his patience and reason.

My own state senator told me he believes in an eye for an eye when I wrote to him about this. Well, I don't believe that. Demanding retribution, blood, and death is not justice. It's barbaric. Justice would be better served by the sentence of life without the possibility of parole.

My experience has tremendously shaped my view of the death penalty. Though my father's conviction did not result in a death sentence, the conviction of another girl's father could. These are not hypothetical criminals. They are real people - with families. Consider: when you sentence someone to death, you are not just sentencing the person who committed the crime. You are sentencing every single last one of that person's family and friends to a kind of death too. And that family is innocent.

For these reasons, I ask you to vote YES on HB 370. Abolish the death penalty.

Melissa Barcroft
7130 Bootlegger Drive
Helena, MT 59602