

**Kansas House Judiciary Committee
February 15, 2024
House Bill 2782
Testimony of Celeste Dixon
Kansas Coalition Against the Death Penalty
Opposed**

My name is Celeste Dixon and I live in Larned, Kansas. As the daughter of a murder victim, I would like to register my opposition to Bill# 2782. I'm opposed to the death penalty because I believe it does more harm than good for victim's family members. Although it's presented as justice to family members it's really a form of revenge that's not at all helpful in the healing process.

When I heard about how things went in the recent nitrogen gas execution in Alabama, I cannot even imagine what it would be like as a family member to have witnessed that. Given the reports of all that happened, it didn't appear to be either peaceful or quick. I believe it would be awful to see something like that. I'm disturbed when I read reports of botched executions because that's not what I need as a murder victim family member.

In my own case, when my mother Marguerite was murdered in her home in Texas in 1986, what I and the rest of my family needed was a way to work through our grief and find some healing for the pain. Instead, we were offered capital punishment for the perpetrator as a way for us to heal. In my experience the prospect of death for the man who killed my mother made me hold on to the anger I felt at losing her, preventing me from healing. And in the process of attending her trial I realized that it made me feel terrible that I was actively wishing for another human being to die, no matter what this person had done.

Although initially supportive of the death penalty, I came to realize that not only does it lessen us as human beings, but because it's so unevenly applied it can't really be justice. And as the family member of a murder victim, I don't believe it's helpful for the state to be continually looking for the "perfect" way to kill somebody. The state should be looking for ways to truly provide healing for family members. Finding "better" ways to kill another human being doesn't accomplish that goal.

Celeste Dixon