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In a Feb. 5 press release, Washington state's Catholic bishops publicly declared their support for a bill to repeal the death penalty in their state.

Senate Bill 5339 seeks to repeal the death penalty and require that life imprisonment without the possibility of parole become the sentence for aggravated first-degree murder convictions.

Washington State Supreme Court ruled that the death penalty was unconstitutional in October 2018. "Senate Bill 5339 removes the unconstitutional language and moves Washington state towards greater justice and respect for life at all stages," said Seattle Archbishop Peter Sartain.

"All citizens have the right to be protected from those who commit the crime of murder," said Sartain. "The act of murder cries out for an appropriate punishment, but the death penalty merely adds violence to violence, perpetuating an illusion that taking one human life for another can somehow balance the scales of justice."

The bishops' stance is rooted in the Catholic Church's belief that every human life is sacred from conception until natural death. The bishops have long opposed capital punishment and, according to the release, have worked "for decades to abolish the death penalty."

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