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Contact: Laura Burstein at: [202-626-6868](tel:202-626-6868) or [Laura.Burstein@squiresanders.com](mailto:Laura.Burstein@squiresanders.com)  
For More Information: [www.terrywilliamsclmency.com](http://www.terrywilliamsclmency.com)

## **Bipartisan Senate Committee in PA Calls On Governor Corbett to Postpone Upcoming Executions**

### **Also Today, PA Coalition Against Rape, The European Union and Human Rights Organizations Join Hundreds of Child Advocates, Faith Leaders, Former Jurors and Victim's Widow in Request to Stop October 3rd Execution**

*(Philadelphia, PA; September 13, 2012)* Today, members of the bipartisan Pennsylvania Task Force and Advisory Committee on Capital Punishment called on Governor Tom Corbett to postpone all upcoming executions until it completes its study of the death penalty and issues its findings in December 2013. Two of the four task force members, Senators Stewart Greenleaf (R) and Daylin Leach (D), and a dozen members of the advisory committee signed the letter to the Governor. Also today, numerous groups against sexual violence and several human rights organizations joined the unprecedented outpouring of support for clemency for Terrance "Terry" Williams.

"[We] do believe that carrying out an execution before our work is completed over the next fifteen months would greatly undermine the legislative intent of Senate Resolution 6 – a comprehensive study of the effectiveness of capital punishment in Pennsylvania, as it pertains to cost, fairness, proportionality, impact, and many other factors," as the Senate Committee letter states (the letter is attached).

On October 3, the Commonwealth is scheduled to execute Terry Williams, whose case has been the subject of unprecedented calls for clemency. Subjected to horrific physical and sexual abuse throughout his childhood and adolescence, including rapes that began when he was just six years old, Terry was sentenced to die after killing two men who had sexually abused him. The murders occurred when Terry was just seventeen and eighteen years old. The jury at Terry's capital trial never knew about his history of abuse, or that the men he killed had raped Terry.

Five of the jurors have submitted sworn affidavits expressing that they believe life without parole is the appropriate sentence for Terry. The jurors previously voted for the death sentence because they did not know all the facts. Notably, the widow of Terry's victim has also asked that Terry's life be spared and that he serve life without parole, and hundreds of prominent supporters have expressed their belief that Terry's case merits commutation to life without parole.

Today, Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and numerous other state coalitions against sexual violence and several human rights organizations joined 35 child advocates, 36

former prosecutors and judges, 48 law professors, 49 mental health professionals, and dozens of faith leaders in publicly calling for Terry's death sentence to be commuted.

The supporters include Frank Cervone, Executive Director of the Support Center for Child Advocates ; Delilah Rumburg, CEO of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape; Sue Osthoff, Director of the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women; Wendy Aguirre, Executive Director for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Philadelphia; Charles Chaput, the Archbishop of Philadelphia; the European Union, and numerous organizations including Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the National Association of Social Workers, and the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

“With our years of experience in reviewing claims of rape and other sexual violence, we speak out clearly that a crime was committed against Terry, nothing less,” wrote the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape. “Under no construction of American law or societal norms, is the sexual exploitation of a 13 year old boy by a 50 year old man a relationship, homosexual or otherwise. It is rape and any suggestion to the contrary is offensive.”

In addition, over 16,000 individuals have signed a petition asking that Terry's sentence be reduced to life without parole.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Corbett and the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons have the power to intervene, stop the execution, and reduce Terry Williams' sentence from death to life without the possibility of parole.

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To speak with Terry's attorney, Shawn Nolan, Assistant Chief of the Capital Habeas Corpus Unit, Federal Community Defender Office for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, or one of Terry's supporters, please contact Laura Burstein at [202-626-6868](tel:202-626-6868) (o) or [Laura.Burstein@squiresanders.com](mailto:Laura.Burstein@squiresanders.com).

Please visit [www.terrywilliamscllemency.com](http://www.terrywilliamscllemency.com) for more background about the case and information about the support for clemency for Terry.