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Testimony in Support of AB 13
Ms. Launa Hall, UNLV Social Work Student
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Good morning, Chairman Anderson and members of the committee. For the record, my name is Launa Hall, and I am a student of social work at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. I am speaking on my own behalf, both as a future social worker and as a Nevada voter. I am here in support of AB 13 in its entirety, and want to specifically address sections 3 thru 7.

The people deserve equity in the death penalty system. I am very disturbed that less than 10 percent of Nevada's population is black, yet at least 40% of our death row population is black. I am frightened that we have a system in which an individual is more likely to be sentenced to death for killing a white American than for killing a black American. I am appalled that other states have performed studies of the death penalty, and have found racial and economic bias in their systems. The question I pose to you is not whether or not we should have the death penalty, but instead I ask whether or not our death penalty system is administered in an equitable fashion? Is this an unbiased system?

I believe that requiring the reporting of statistical information in the most serious of criminal cases is a critical component of ensuring that we have a death penalty system that is fair, that is unbiased, and that does not punish people unequally for the same crime.

The Legislative Commission's Subcommittee, during their study, found that there was enough question about the fairness in the administration of the death penalty to warrant drafting these sections of AB13. This, in itself, says something very clearly to me: if there are questions about whether Nevada's death penalty system is less than equitable, then the State is obligated to determine whether the system is broken.

As a student of social work, I have learned that the National Association of Social Workers advocates for the monitoring and promoting of criminal justice policies that do not discriminate against individuals based on race, ethnicity, class, political affiliation, or place of residence. This issue is very important to me because the things that you do will affect my future practice, my future clients and me. I urge members of the committee to support AB13 and ensure that we have a death penalty system that is fair, equitable and accurate.

Thank you, Chairman Anderson, for the opportunity to speak.

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ASSEMBLY JUDICIARY

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SUBMITTED BY: Launa Hall