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State of Tennessee

NASHVILLE

June 25, 2026

The Honorable Bill Lee
Governor of Tennessee
State Capitol
600 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Governor Lee:

We write as members of the Tennessee Senate who support the death penalty, to express our serious concern over the failed execution of Tony Von Carruthers on May 21, 2026, and to call for full transparency and accountability from the Department of Correction.

By the Department's own account, the execution team at Riverbend Maximum Security Institution set a primary intravenous line but could not establish the backup line its protocol requires, could not locate another suitable vein, and failed in an attempt to place a central line. The effort dragged on for well over an hour before the execution was called off. This was a failure of the State of Tennessee to carry out a lawful sentence of its own courts.

A jury condemned Tony Von Carruthers to death for the 1994 kidnapping and murder of three people in Memphis, and that sentence was affirmed through three decades of exhaustive review. The families of his victims have waited thirty years for the judgment of the law to be carried out. They, and the people of this state, are entitled to a Department of Correction capable of executing a lawful sentence competently and according to its own written protocol. On May 21, the Department was not.

This failure was not the first. In 2022, an independent review found the Department had repeatedly failed to follow its own requirements for testing lethal injection chemicals — failures grave enough to halt executions in Tennessee for years. The same question now returns: whether the Department is competently discharging the duties the law has placed in its hands. Repeated failures of this kind do not advance justice; they obstruct it, prolong the suffering of victims' families, and hand the opponents of capital punishment their most effective argument against a penalty Tennesseans have chosen to keep.

Because we support the lawful administration of the death penalty, we cannot accept its incompetent administration. We respectfully but firmly call upon your administration to:

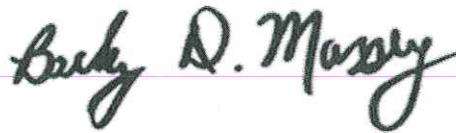
1. Commission an independent review of the failed execution of May 21, 2026, including a full accounting of how the personnel involved were selected, what credentials they held, and whether they were qualified to perform the procedures the protocol requires;
2. Correct every deficiency that review identifies — including independent testing of the execution drugs for potency, sterility, and contamination, written confirmation that the drugs are not expired, and verification that all personnel are properly qualified — before the State attempts another execution; and
3. Make those testing results and personnel qualifications available to this body and to the public, to the fullest extent consistent with law, so that the Department's readiness can be independently verified;

We raise these concerns not in opposition to the death penalty but in defense of it — out of respect for the rule of law, the verdicts of Tennessee juries, and the families still awaiting justice. We stand ready to work with you and Commissioner Strada to see the law carried out as it should be. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,



Senator Tom Hatcher



Senator Becky Massey



Senator Ken Yager



Senator Paul Bailey



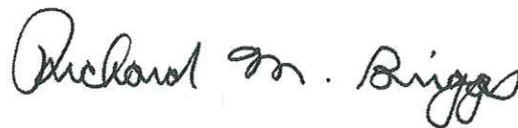
Senator Dawn White



Senator Joey Hensley



Senate Majority Leader Jack Johnson



Senator Richard Briggs



Senator Ferrell Haile