Facts about the Death Penalty

● New death sentences in Texas have decreased significantly since peaking in 1999, when juries sentenced 48 people to death. In 2021, new death sentences remained in the single digits for the seventh year in a row. No one has been sentenced to death in Texas to date in 2022.

● Juries in Bexar, Smith, and Hunt counties accounted for the three new death sentences in Texas in 2021.

● Death sentences continue to be imposed disproportionately on people of color. Over the last five years, 40% of death sentences in Texas have been imposed on Black men even though the Black population of Texas is only 11.8% of residents.

● Only three counties in Texas (Harris, Smith, and Walker) have imposed more than one death sentence in the last five years.

● Since 1973, 187 individuals who spent time on death row have been exonerated. This includes 16 people convicted and sentenced to death in Texas, according to the Death Penalty Information Center.

● The State of Texas has executed 574 people since 1982, accounting for more than one-third of all executions nationwide since 1977.

● In 2021, the State of Texas executed three people, matching 2020 for the fewest executions since 1996. Executions were halted in 2021 due to challenges in the courts regarding intellectual disability and religious liberty claims.

● To date in 2022, the State of Texas has carried out one execution, putting Carl Wayne Buntion to death on April 21. At 78, Buntion was the oldest person to be executed by the State of Texas. He was convicted in 1991 in Harris County. Two other individuals—Michael Gonzales and Melissa Lucio—were granted stays of execution.

● Currently, there are 195 people on death row in Texas, including 6 women; this is the state’s smallest death row population since 1985.

● In Texas, the cost of an average death penalty case is nearly three times higher than imprisoning someone for life without the possibility of parole.

● 23 states (most recently, Virginia) have abandoned the death penalty through legislation or judicial decisions. Governors in three other states have imposed a moratorium on executions.

● At least 144 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice. In 2021, the top five executing countries were, China, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.