

FLORIDA CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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MICHAEL B. SHEEDY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



August 14, 2024

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Governor of Florida
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Re: Please stay the execution of Loran Cole, and commute his sentence

Dear Governor DeSantis:

We are deeply troubled by the death warrant for the execution of Loran Cole, a survivor of the Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys. The crimes he and William Paul committed against John Edwards and his sister in 1994 are extremely heinous. Murdering Mr. Edwards and robbing, kidnapping and assaulting his sister were terrible crimes. We pray for the Edwards family. For their acts of violence, Mr. Cole was tried and sentenced to death, and Mr. Paul pleaded no contest and was sentenced to life in prison.

We do implore you to commute Mr. Cole's sentence to life without the possibility of parole. It is notable that Mr. Cole's execution is scheduled on the heels of your approval of the Dozier School for Boys and Okeechobee School Victim Compensation Program, which will provide reparations for hundreds of men who endured the brutal abuse and torture at these state-based institutions. As is the case here, too often, those who commit grave crimes have been subjected themselves to terrible trauma.

Mr. Cole himself was beaten, raped and tormented at Dozier. He witnessed torture and daily beatings of other students. He was once forced to clean up the remains of another student who died by suicide after jumping off a building. He had his legs broken after trying to escape. Mr. Cole's jury never heard about the physical and mental abuse he endured at the hands of officers at Dozier.

Executing Mr. Cole will not contribute to restoring the lives of his victims. Instead, state-sanctioned killing perpetuates societal disregard for the sanctity of human life. In our modern penal system, executions have become unnecessary. Sentencing individuals to life-long incarceration without the possibility of parole is a severe yet more humane punishment that ensures societal safety and offers closure for victims of crime and their families.

Never having received mental health and trauma treatment until his arrival on death row in his late 20s, Mr. Cole, at age 57, is not the same person who committed the grave crimes for which he was convicted.

Floridians across the state will soon gather in solidarity to pray for peace and healing for the Edwards family and all harmed by Mr. Cole's actions. They will also pray for forgiveness and God's mercy for him, along with an end to the use of the death penalty. We also pray for you as you consider this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael B. Sheedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael B. Sheedy

cc: Archbishop and Bishops of Florida
Tammy Fecci, Associate of Life and Dignity