

Response ID ANON-E8XJ-D7UA-G

Submitted to Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill
Submitted on 2026-05-04 13:41:54

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:
Bernadette Kelly

What is your email address?

Email:
[REDACTED]

If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation or business, please state its name.

Organisation:
Harper's Law / Assaults on ESP

The Committee for Justice has agreed to publish all responses as part of the survey results. If you would like to have your survey results anonymised and for us not to publish your name or organisation, please indicate so here.

I am content for my information, including details of my name and organisation, to be published in the survey results.

Any Other Comments on the Bill

Do you have any other comments or views on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill?

Yes

Please provide any other comments or views you have on the Criminal Justice (Sentencing etc) Bill here::

To bring Harper's Law to Northern Ireland. Harper's Law England & Wales came into effect on June 20 2022, it covers murder while on duty for Nurses, Doctors, Police Ambulance & Fire personnel, Prison Officers. It has been used twice in court. 1. Sgt Ratana shot in the chest and leg at Croydon custody centre. 2. PC Beshenivsky shot dead in Bradford by Khan. Khan was extradited to the UK. Both tried under Harper's Law and received whole life sentences (40 years).

Assaults on Nurses, Doctors, Police Ambulance & Fire personnel, Prison Officers sentencing should be higher and should be part of Harper's Law due to severe injuries inflicted. This sentencing should not include shop workers, Translink workers etc as a separate sentence should be for them. Below are the figures for assaults on our emergency personnel and nurses.

From Jan 1st 2021 until Nov 30 2025

PSNI 14,281

NIAS: 2,093

NIPS 290

NIFR 28 attacks:

Belfast Trust 12,786

South Eastern Trust 5,402

Southern Trust 5,451

Western Trust 6,340

Northern Trust 3,208.

All our Emergency Services, Doctors and Nurses protect and save us. Although other service providers do not deserve to be assaulted but if I break my leg I do not Translink or if I am being burgled I do not ring Asda they should have a separate sentence.

I am calling for assaults on our ESP, doctors and nurses to be classed as a serious criminal offence with an instant custodial sentence and for sentences to range from 5 years minimum to 20 years maximum with very heavy fines, due to the constant assaults on our brave and supportive men and women, we must bring a deterrent. Alcohol and drugs should never be a defense for criminal charges. Mental health should be accessed in prison.

I would also like to see ramming police vehicles as attempted/murder with a dangerous weapon. There have been far too many police vehicles rammed with injuries. Below are figures of these rammings.

From Jan 1st 2021 to Nov 30th 2025

Police vehicles rammed 203: Repair costs 500,677.84.

Vehicles written off/replacement cost 225,768.00

I only have figures for injuries for 2023 and 2025

2023 77 police officers injured.

2025 43 police officers injured.

Offenders must pay for the damage or replacement of these vehicles.

I have had meetings with all organisations and unions and they all supported Harper's Law being brought to Northern Ireland.

A life sentence in the United States is

a prison term for a serious crime (e.g., murder, treason) where the offender remains incarcerated for their natural life, either with or without parole. "Life without parole" (LWOP) means death in prison, while "indeterminate" life sentences (e.g., 25 years-to-life) allow for parole eligibility.

Key Details on Life Sentences in the U.S.

Life Without Parole (LWOP): This is the most severe punishment in states without the death penalty, sometimes called "determinate" life sentences.

Indeterminate Life Sentence: Typically, a "life" sentence has a minimum term (often 15 to 25 years) before the inmate is eligible for parole consideration.

Virtual Life Sentences: These are sentences of 50+ years, often given to older offenders or as consecutive terms, acting as de facto life sentences.

Consecutive Sentencing: A person can receive multiple life sentences (e.g., three consecutive life sentences), ensuring they never get out.

Scope and Usage: One in nine U.S. prisoners is serving a life sentence. The use of life sentences has increased significantly since the 1980s and 1990s, with many states eliminating parole entirely.

Enhanced Penalties: Assaulting a police officer is frequently classified as a felony, whereas similar assaults on civilians might be misdemeanors.

Assaults on emergency workers in the US are increasingly treated as severe criminal offenses, often upgraded to felony status. Australian laws are the same.