

1 State of Arkansas  
2 93rd General Assembly  
3 Regular Session, 2021  
4

# A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1914

5 By: Representatives V. Flowers, Hawks, Pilkington, Penzo  
6 By: Senator G. Leding  
7

## For An Act To Be Entitled

9 AN ACT CONCERNING THE IMPOSITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY  
10 ON A DEFENDANT WITH A SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS; AND FOR  
11 OTHER PURPOSES.  
12  
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## Subtitle

15 CONCERNING THE IMPOSITION OF THE DEATH  
16 PENALTY ON A DEFENDANT WITH A SERIOUS  
17 MENTAL ILLNESS.  
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20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:  
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22 SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Legislative intent.

23 It is the intent of the General Assembly that this act not be applied  
24 retroactively.  
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26 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 5-4-101, concerning definitions used  
27 regarding the disposition of criminal offenders, is amended to add additional  
28 subsections to read as follows:

29 (7) "Active symptoms" means symptoms of a serious mental  
30 illness, including without limitation:

31 (A) A delusion;

32 (B) A hallucination;

33 (C) Extremely disorganized thinking;

34 (D) Mania; or

35 (E) Very significant disruptions of consciousness, memory,  
36 and perception of the environment;



1 (8) "Delusion" means a fixed and clearly false belief;

2 (9) "Hallucination" means a clearly erroneous perception of  
 3 reality;

4 (10)(A) "Person has a serious mental illness" means a person  
 5 who, at the time of an offense, had active symptoms of a serious mental  
 6 illness that substantially impaired his or her capacity to:

7 (i) Appreciate the nature, consequences, or  
 8 wrongfulness of his or her conduct;

9 (ii) Exercise rational judgment in relation to his  
 10 or her conduct; or

11 (iii) Conform his or her conduct to the requirements  
 12 of the law.

13 (B) "Person has a serious mental illness" includes a  
 14 person diagnosed with a serious mental illness before and after commission of  
 15 an offense; and

16 (11)(A) "Serious mental illness" means one (1) or more of the  
 17 following disorders as classified in the American Psychiatric Association's  
 18 Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders as it existed on  
 19 January 1, 2021:

20 (i) Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic  
 21 disorders;

22 (ii) Bipolar disorder;

23 (iii) Major depressive disorder;

24 (iv) Delusional disorder;

25 (v) Post-traumatic stress disorder; or

26 (vi) A disorder resulting from traumatic brain  
 27 injury.

28 (B) "Serious mental illness" does not include a disorder  
 29 manifested primarily by repeated criminal conduct or attributable solely to  
 30 the acute effects of the voluntary use of alcohol or other drugs.

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 32 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code Title 5, Chapter 4, Subchapter 6, is amended  
 33 to add an additional section to read as follows:

34 5-4-609. Serious mental illness.

35 (a) A person may file a petition with the trial court alleging that  
 36 the person has a serious mental illness if the person is charged with an

1 offense for which the state seeks a sentence of death.

2 (b)(1) If a person files a petition under this section, the trial  
3 court shall order an evaluation of the person to provide evidence of whether  
4 the person has a serious mental illness.

5 (2) The trial court shall appoint two (2) examiners, each of  
6 whom shall be a psychiatrist or psychologist licensed by the Arkansas State  
7 Medical Board as a health service provider in psychiatry or psychology and  
8 experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of individuals with a serious  
9 mental illness.

10 (3) The examiners shall provide a written report to the trial  
11 court offering an opinion as to whether the person has a serious mental  
12 illness.

13 (c)(1) A statement that a person makes as part of an evaluation or at  
14 a hearing under this section may be used against the person on the issue of  
15 guilt in a criminal proceeding.

16 (2) However, the person or the state may call an examiner as a  
17 witness in the criminal proceeding.

18 (d) This section does not preclude the person or the state from  
19 presenting other evidence on the issue of whether the person has a serious  
20 mental illness.

21 (e)(1) The trial court shall conduct a hearing on a petition filed  
22 under this section.

23 (2) The trial court may determine that the person has a serious  
24 mental illness only if the person proves by a preponderance of the evidence  
25 at the hearing that the person has a serious mental illness.

26 (3)(A) Not later than thirty (30) days after the hearing, the  
27 trial court shall determine whether the person has a serious mental illness  
28 based on the evidence presented at the hearing.

29 (B) The trial court shall issue written findings  
30 supporting its determination under subdivision (e)(3)(A) of this section.

31 (f) If the trial court determines that the person has a serious mental  
32 illness, the state may not seek a sentence of death but may seek a sentence  
33 of life imprisonment without parole.

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