

Aug 8, 2022

To Whom It May Concern

This letter serves to act as a letter of recommendation and testimony as to the valuable work that Phola Mahlaba and her organization, Behind and Beyond Bars provides to primary and secondary victims of violent crimes.

Phola has been an incredible resource to myself, my family, and the rest of the secondary victims within our case, the Sizzlers Massacre. In the short amount of time that I've been working with Phola, she has armed us with valuable information, helping me navigate not only the Victim Offender Dialogue but also the impending parole process the victims within our case face.

The need for organizations like Phola's in South Africa is important, I would even go as far as to say hyper-critical. I often found myself in a place of complete despair prior to working with her because simply there are not enough information and resources at the Department of Corrections to be able to provide support to victims and guide them through this process. More often than none we hear of cases where victims take to media in protest of some of the misgivings of the parole process. I speak from experience in my own case where the Department of Correctional Services is having to restart the parole process due to oversight of ensuring family members were present at proceedings. These oversights happen due to sheer under-resourcing within the Department, Phola's organization, Behind and Beyond the Bars arms victims with the necessary information they need to navigate the process, as a result, taking on a lot of the heavy lifting required by the Department. I believe that Phola and her organization, Behind and Beyond Bars would be a major asset to victims in aid of navigating the VOD and parole process.

Feel free to contact me personally should you require additional information.

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