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Andrew Cuomo, Governor
State of New York
State Capitol, Executive Chambers
Albany, New York 12224

December 9, 2011

RE: A letter in Support of Richard Berger,
#86-C-0790, for Commutation of his sentence

Dear Governor Cuomo,

It is with much sincerity that I write this letter of commendation for inmate Richard Berger #86-C-0790. The purpose of my letter is to implore upon you to spend serious time in evaluating my comments.

Mr. Berger has been incarcerated for approximately 27 years. I served as his Chaplain in 1986-1987 and again from 1988 through 2002, and now again for the last few months here at Sullivan Correctional Facility.

I have observed an enormous transformation in his character and demeanor. As a young man he was rambunctious, boisterous, outspoken, arrogant and very sure of himself. Now, 27 years later, he is evidently a changed man.

Mr. Berger, upon entering prison, had already graduated high school with a Regents diploma, and accumulated college credits from Sullivan County Community College, Monroe County Community College and Brockport State University. Naturally, there was not much that the educational departments in the state facilities could offer him, other than vocational courses. In this regard, he received certificates of completion and training from various facilities that he found himself in, such as... "Operation of Industrial Equipment (forklift) and Operation of Industrial Equipment (highboy paint and maintenance platform)", among others.

Mr. Berger has involved himself also in improving the outlook of his fellow inmates. Having attained nearly 100 (One Hundred) certificates for AVP (Alternatives to Violence Program) and as a Facilitator for this program, he has helped many inmates overcome their tendencies to violence and anger. Presenting himself as an example that it can really be done if one puts himself up to do so. Richard showed

how an inmate can personally and with confidence deal with confusion and stress as learning experiences.

What is amazing about Mr. Bergers' change in his outlook on life, is a Project he thought about, developed and put into practice. Richard started what he calls, The Jewish Charity Group. The primary Goal of this Group is to provide greeting cards for all occasions to inmates who are indigent. From my personal experience, I know that is really significant! Often times, I was hardpressed to fulfill a request of inmates for birthday, anniversary and other occasion cards. As a Chaplain, I give these out to inmates of any religious persuasion, however, they were not always available, and there were times that I brought those in from home! Richard has changed all that.

Richard has made contact with various companies and organizations who are sympathetic to this cause, and they continue to supply him with thousands of cards free of charge, which he distributes, free of charge, to any inmate requesting them through channels.

Richard has established a relationship with many Chaplains to whom he sends thousands of cards during the year, and he pays the postage himself! Chaplains who benefit from this program are from all denominations and they unanimously praise Richard for his Generosity and Thoughtfulness.

I believe that all of the above indicates that a great change has taken place in the life of Richard Berger. In a word, he has become a very compassionate human being, thinking of others rather than himself.

I am convinced that if you would grant him Commutation, he would enter society safely and be a source of much more charitable work and serving any community he would establish himself in.

Rabbi Irving Goodman