

**Linda Mann  
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Hon, Andrew Cuomo  
Governor, New York State  
State Capital, Executive Chambers  
Albany, New York 12224

December 27, 2011

Re: letter of Support of Commutation for Richard Berger #86-C-0790

Dear Governor Cuomo,

My name is Linda Mann. I recently moved to Florida after living in Brooklyn for 47 years.

This past summer I had the opportunity to go to a prison and visit with a prisoner for the first time. It was a new experience for me. I met with Richard Berger. It was not a planned event for me but I happened to be along for the ride with a friend who routinely visits prisoners as a volunteer with an organization.

I naturally asked, "Why would I want to meet with someone in prison especially someone I did not know?" My friend told me about Richard, that he was in prison for over 25 years. He told me how Richard came from a good Jewish family and that he was a very up-spirited person. He also explained to me just how much the visit would mean to Richard. So I added visiting a prisoner to my list of new experiences.

I was surprised just how much the experience changed me. It was a reaction I was not prepared for. I guess just like many others I had never given it much thought.

Richard was everything my friend had described and more. I listened; I asked questions and got to know Richard. He writes to my friend often and always sends regards to me. And yes, I have made the trip back to New York to visit Richard again.

I know that many people are writing to you on Richards' behalf. I have actually seen a few of the letters, programs, certificates and letters of recommendation. They are all accurate but are just a small part of who Richard really is

When I look at him I ask myself, is that what someone who has spent over one half of their life in prison looks like? Then I thought...what do I look like to him? He noticed me staring at him and asked, "Do I look so bad? Do I look like I have been here 27 years?" It was like he read my thoughts. He ;laughed it off but when my friend went to the vending machine I asked Richard how he knew just what I was thinking. His response was that he had a lot of time to think and contemplate life. He tries to see what others see when they come to visit him. I frankly asked him, "What about your crime?" He asked me if I thought there was a certain look or a sign that someone had because they were in prison. He told me he got involved with the wrong people when he was in college. I asked.. "but murder, Richard?" He told he that he did not commit the crime but the person who did said that Richard had told him to do it. I didn't think that seemed right.

By this time my friend had returned from the vending machine and heard what we were discussing. My friend broke down the crime and the people that were involved including the lawyers that also went to prison. I was shocked.

I knew then that I had to do something to help. When I asked Richard what I could do he then asked me to write to you on his behalf.

Although I have only known Richard for a short time, I feel like I have been able to get to know the essence of who he is as a person today. Obviously a changed man from the young person who entered prison so many years ago. He has changed me and my perception of prison and prisoners.

I do not take lightly the severity of the crime that was committed but like your father I do not believe in the death penalty. After spending more than half his life in prison isn't it time that Richard gets to prove himself to society and get another chance.

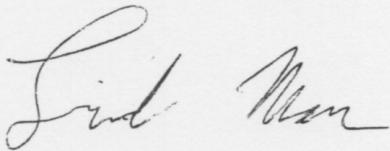
Richard has told me about how the prison population has grown from 30,000 when he first came into the system to over 72,000 at one point and now back down to 53,000. I support your effort to make the population even smaller.

I can only hope that you will give Richard the benefit of the doubt in this case. See that he has been rehabilitated, that the system has tempered him and made him into the person he is today, a kind, mature middle aged adult.

To what benefit would it be to hold him any longer? Any more time would be of no benefit to the state. Richard is not a gang member nor a drug user. I can certainly see him making a successful transition to the outside community and am confident in his desire to give back and help fellow prisoners make a successful transition as well.

The rules governing Pardons, Clemency and Commutations say, it is not a right but by the grace of... that allows someone to get out before his or her full sentence. I truly believe Richard deserves to have this chance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Linda Man". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Cc: Donald D. Fries, Director  
Executive Clemency Bureau  
97 Central Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206