

The Honorable Ralph Northam  
Office of the Governor  
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Michael R. Clem  
Street  
Charlottesville, VA

4 March 2019

Subject: Character Letter for Jesse Crosson

Dear Governor Northam,

My name is Michael Clem. I am a 53-year-old resident of Charlottesville, Virginia, where I make my living as a self-employed musician. I am also a member of Alcoholics Anonymous where I've maintained more than seven years of continuous sobriety. It was in the Fellowship that I have come to know Jesse Crosson, the subject of this letter. Through the help of his mother, Nancy Kern, I have been Jesse's AA sponsor.

I am familiar with Jesse's charges from crimes committed during his late teenage years: robbery, abduction and unlawful wounding from a robbery and unrelated shooting. I also know that Jesse has been serving an extraordinarily long sentence for these crimes.

Many a felon would have been released by now for such similar crimes, yet Jesse still has another dozen years to go after already serving 18 years.

To say that Jesse has undergone a complete transformation during his sentence, would be a dramatic understatement. Ask any guard or prison personnel member who have come to know Jesse, and they will share their disbelief that this fine young man is behind bars. Not one to sit on his laurels, Jesse has maximized all of his God-given talents to become an eager scholar and a disciplined athlete. A voracious reader, Jesse has learned multiple languages and probed in-depth studies of the different religions and philosophies of the world. He's developed strong relationships with fellow inmates and has helped form a wrestling club, where he not only participates, but helps to instruct.

I remain ever impressed with Jesse's enthusiasm, as he has shared his interest with me in helping out disadvantaged children with all he has learned. I never hear him wallow in self-pity. Rather, he is always forward-thinking, incredibly grounded, and quite sober.

Here is the biggest crime of all - Jesse's talents and gifts are being wasted with a grotesquely long sentence, and our Commonwealth is being denied a completely reformed young man who will be an incredible asset to our community, where such leadership and guidance, like Jesse's, for our young are sorely needed.

In full honesty, I confess that I, too, was once incarcerated (in 2012 for a DUI). I have seen with my own eyes the attitudes and dispositions of felons, and many repeat offenders. One of the more depressing realizations I had from my experience was how little actual reform happens in imprisonment. So many of my fellow inmates showed any remorse, and seemed determine to carry on with lives of crime and illegal activity. That is why Jesse so astonishes me. In Jesse, I see a young man who has completely reformed. His time spent behind bars did what so many of us wish it would do - change the hearts and minds of our misguided & erring members of society.

I know that once released, Jesse will not only be a non-threat to society, but a viable, loving participant in the human race. As his sponsor in AA, I am grooming him to be a sponsor to other alcoholics, as that is the primary purpose of our program. I look forward to helping him get reacclimatized to a world from which he has been removed for far too long.

I appreciate your consideration for Clemency for Jesse, Governor Northam. I know you can appreciate that these days we have become a people rich in scorn, and shy on forgiveness. Jesse has more than served his fair share of time for his crimes, and will undoubtedly soar as a refreshed member of society. He's not only eager to be free, he is eager to serve. Please feel free to contact me with any questions, and anything I can do to advance Jesse's cause.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael R. Clem