

November 11, 2020

Donald J. Trump, President
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear President Trump:

We write today as advocates who provide support to the most vulnerable among us: children who have been exploited and victimized by neglect, violence, and sexual abuse. Lisa Montgomery, who is scheduled to be executed on December 8, 2020, was one of those children. Sexually trafficked as a young child by her own mother, and repeatedly sexually and physically abused by multiple men for many years, Lisa's mind broke from her horrifying reality. While profoundly mentally ill and severely traumatized, Lisa committed a crime for which she will continue to pay a heavy price. But she should not be executed.

As child and family advocates, we step in for children who have been abused, victimized, and/or abandoned by their parents or caregivers. Tragically, no one stepped in to save Lisa. Lisa was repeatedly abused and exploited by the very adults she turned to for protection – first her own mother and stepfathers, then her partners. There were many missed opportunities to intervene and stop Lisa's suffering: Lisa's sister was removed from the home by social services and escaped their mother's abuse, but Lisa was left behind; a judge learned about Lisa's childhood rapes by her stepfather, but failed to take action; Lisa's cousin, a police officer, was told that her mother was selling her to multiple men for sex, but also did nothing. In a final betrayal, the justice system failed Lisa when prosecutors dismissed her experiences as an "abuse excuse" – a characterization that is contrary to all the evidence and everything we understand as experts in this field.

We know from our work with children that being unable to escape a cycle of abuse exacts a terrible mental toll. This was sadly true for Lisa. Her crime reflected the desperation, shame, and hopelessness that many victims of extreme child abuse feel. We are therefore unsurprised that mental health experts have concluded that Lisa's crime was a direct consequence of her years of trauma and resulting mental illness.

While there is no excuse for Lisa's crime, her trauma history is critically relevant to the penalty she should receive. She is willing to spend the rest of her natural life in prison. Executing her now would only needlessly punish a woman who has already experienced a lifetime of pain.

In light of her history, we believe that Lisa is deserving of mercy, which you alone have the power to grant. We urge you to exercise your authority and commute Lisa's sentence to life without the possibility of parole.

The following signatories join this request:

Judith A. Algeo
Doylestown, PA

Morgen Black-Smith, Staff Attorney
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia, PA

Merrilee Weiss Bodzin
Mitigation Specialist, former Child Advocate
Philadelphia, PA

Bruce A. Boyer
Director, Civitas ChildLaw Clinic
Loyola University Chicago School of Law
Chicago, IL

John F. Burns, Board Member
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia PA

Frank P. Cervone, Executive Director
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia, PA

Children's Advocacy Institute
Amy Harfeld, National Policy Director
San Diego, CA

Children's Village
Mary Graham, Executive Director
Philadelphia, PA

Community Legal Services of Philadelphia
Kathleen Creamer, Managing Attorney
Philadelphia, PA

Tony DeMarco
Pediatric Attorney
Lynn, MA

Bernardine Dohrn (founding Director-ret.)
Children and Family Justice Center
Northwestern University School of Law
Chicago, IL

Donald N. Duquette
Clinical Professor Emeritus of Law
Founding Director, Child Advocacy Law Clinic
University of Michigan Law School
Ann Arbor, MI

Kim Dvorchak
Takoma Park, MD

Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Senior Director
Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Policy
First Focus on Children
Hyattsville, MD

Barbara J. Elias-Perciful, Director
Texas Lawyers for Children
Dallas, TX

Pamela Ende, Attorney
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia, PA

David Fair, Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Turning Points for Children
Philadelphia, PA

Dean Jerrehian
Child Advocate Attorney
Philadelphia PA

Losmin Jimenez
Baltimore, MD/Washington, DC

Juvenile Law Center
Sue Mangold, CEO
Philadelphia PA

Barry Kassel, Supervising Attorney
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia, PA

Sarah Keating, Principal
Keating Partners
Narberth, PA

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children
Erin Lovell, Executive Director
Seattle, WA

Antonia Lewis, Child Advocate Social Worker
Support Center for Child Advocates
Philadelphia PA

Noreena Sondhi Lewis
Wilmington, DE

(continued)

Erin Mulanax, Children's advocate attorney
Mulanax Law Firm, P.C.
Amarillo, TX

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children
Rachael M. Miller, Policy Director
Harrisburg, PA

Clark M. Peters, Assoc. Professor
University of Missouri–Columbia
School of Social Work
Columbia, MO

Public Citizens for Children and Youth
Donna Cooper, Executive Director
Laurie Dow, Vulnerable Youth Policy Director
Philadelphia, PA

Shannon Prown
Rose Valley, PA

Robin Rosenberg, Deputy Director
Florida's Children First
Coral Springs, FL

Judith Sandalow, Executive Director
Children's Law Center
Washington, DC

Cassie A. Solomon, President
The New Group Consulting, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Leslie A. Spina, Executive Director and CEO
Kinder Academy, Inc.
Philadelphia, PA

Christina Spudeas, Executive Director
Florida's Children First
Coral Springs, FL

Casey Trupin
Seattle, WA

Michael Wald, Professor of Law Emeritus
Stanford University
Stanford, CA

Julie K. Waterstone, Director
Children's Rights Clinic
Southwestern Law School
Los Angeles, CA

Barbara Bennett Woodhouse
Director, Child Rights Project
Emory University School of Law
Atlanta, GA

Karen Worthington
Children's Policy Atty/Child Welfare Law Specialist
Kula, HI