

Guidelines for a Parole Letter

PAROLE SUPPORT LETTERS

The following information, taken from Parole Board guidelines has been published once a year for five years, to benefit family and friends of convicts who write letters to the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Inmates in the Ohio prison system are encouraged by the Board to provide evidence of support for their release on parole. One way to do this is through letters supporting an inmate's release. The information below is provided for inmates and family members who have questions about such letters.

SUPPORT LETTERS FOR THE PAROLE FILE

There are no rules for support letters. These are only guidelines and suggestions. You must use what fits your own special situation. Don't be afraid to ask people to write letters. Many people care and want to help. Your request for help may give them a better understanding of the correctional process.

WHAT IS A LETTER OF SUPPORT?

Letters of support are evidence that the offender will have a network of friends and family to help when he or she is released. They show:

1. Somebody knows the inmate and cares.
2. The inmate has free world input while in prison.
3. Someone will help when he/she gets out.
4. The good side of the inmate and thus help balance the bad side, which appears in his or her criminal record.

WHO WRITES SUPPORT LETTERS?

1. You, family members, close friends and loved ones.
2. Relatives, aunts, uncles, and grandparents.
3. Respected members of the community, such as businessmen.
4. Prospective employers, school teachers, religious teachers, students, counselors, etc.
5. Most inmate's DOC supervisors or other people who have known him/her while in prison, e.g. chaplain, counselor, teacher, volunteers from the community, check your state requirements.

If you can't find anyone who knows the inmate, you may ask for letters from people who know you and state that your support will be of value during the offender's re-adjustment to the community.

Also, people can write offering their support for the inmate based on their position in the community (such as a minister in your church.)

HOW MANY SUPPORT LETTERS?

At the time of the parole interview, three to ten support letters should be enough. Keep sending support letters regularly, not just at the parole interview date. This shows consistency and active support and lets the Parole Board know that you'll stick by the inmate after release.

WHAT TO SAY?

There are several general areas of information to be included in these letters.

1. State your name, age and occupation. If you have been on the current job for a number of years, state the number of years you have been similarly employed.
2. State your relationship with the inmate and the length you have known him or her.
3. Your belief that, despite his/her mistake, he/she is a good person and the reason you feel this way.
4. Your belief that the offender will be a useful and law abiding citizen if given the opportunity. You may describe improvements in the inmate's attitude, behavior, or efforts he/she has made to improve

himself/herself. If you will provide housing, give the address and a phone number if you have one. You can mention other kinds of help you can provide, for instance, clothing or transportation.

Other people who will write a support letters may include the same type of information. If they are willing to help the inmate in some way, they may include that in the letter. Some people are willing to help, but don't have money or a job to offer. They can offer to spend time with the offender doing something positive and worthwhile, or they can offer advice and encouragement. This kind of help is also necessary for someone just released from prison.

OUTLINE OF THE SUGGESTED THINGS TO COVER IN THE LETTER

Salutation:

Parole Board (each state has their own way of referring to its board)
1050 Freeme Drive
Somewhere, State 43229
(111) 222-3333

You may address your letters to a specific person on the Parole Board, if you wish, but it is also acceptable to address your letter Dear Parole Board Member:

FIRST PARAGRAPH

State your name, age, and occupation. If you have been on the same job for a number of years, state the number of years you have been similarly employed.

SECOND PARAGRAPH

State your relationship with him/her (e.g. friend, relative, teacher, employer, co-worker, etc.)

THIRD PARAGRAPH

Your belief that the, despite his/her mistakes, he/she is a good person; the reason you feel this way, your belief that he/she will be a useful and a law abiding citizen given the chance. Describe any improvements in the inmate's attitude, behavior, or efforts he/she has made to improve himself/herself (education, treatment programs).

FOURTH PARAGRAPH

Your willingness to be supportive and how, e.g. if you will provide housing, give address and phone number if you have one, transportation, job offer. Other people, who are willing to help, but don't have money or a job to offer, can be supportive and worthwhile by offering advice and encouragement. Additional suggestions from a lawyer friend to go along with this information....

1. If you or someone you know has written support letters in the past make copies and include them with the parole packet.
2. Included in this packet should be any information and/or photocopies of awards or achievements your loved one may have achieved while incarcerated.
3. Write out a "game plan." What does your loved one plan to do when he or she gets out? Be specific. Tell the board what job opportunities are in the area.
4. Make a copy of the packet and send it to your loved one. Your loved one should write up a similar type of packet themselves. They can make a separate one, or include it in the one you make for them. He or she should present the packet(s) to the person who comes to interview them when parole time approaches. It makes a much better impression when they have obviously made preparations for their future, as well as having a source from the outside who cared enough to put together a presentation packet as well.