



July 1, 2020

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
8610 Shoal Creek Boulevard
Austin, Texas 78757

Dear Chairman Gutierrez and members of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles,

I am writing to you as someone who was nearly executed for a crime I did not commit. I was fully exonerated in 1993 and now I am the Executive Director of Witness to Innocence, an organization of men and women who have been exonerated from death row. The years I spent on death row before proving my innocence gave me an up-close look at capital punishment. I believe that the death penalty jeopardizes the integrity of Texas' entire criminal justice system.

I am writing to urge you to grant clemency or at least a reprieve to Billy Joe Wardlow (TDCJ #999137, DOB 11/25/1974), who is scheduled to be executed on July 8, 2020. Mr. Wardlow was sentenced to death when he was only 18 for the unintended killing of Carl Cole. When he was sentenced, the jury was forced to decide whether he would be dangerous in the future.

At just 18 years old, his whole future was decided. Scientific research now shows that there is no way to determine whether someone under the age of 21 will be dangerous in the future. Our brains do not fully mature until we reach our mid-twenties. Billy Joe Wardlow has not been dangerous at all in the 25 years he has spent on death row. In fact, kindness and compassion towards others are his defining characteristics. He is considered a peacemaker and a calming presence among individuals on death row.

The death penalty is a failed program that is being abandoned across the nation. Last year, Texas was one of only seven states to carry out executions, and one of only five states to do so in 2020. The death penalty does not deter crime and the money saved in not pursuing capital cases can fund the prosecution of far more crimes and better provide for public safety. Do not execute a man who killed someone in a robbery gone wrong with no premeditation when he was only 18 years old.

On behalf of the exonerated death row survivors, I urge you to grant Billy Joe Wardlow clemency.

Peace with Justice,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirk Bloodworth".

Kirk Bloodworth
Executive Director