

SENATE OF VIRGINIA

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TRANSPORTATION

April 1, 2021

The Honorable Ralph S. Northam
Governor of Virginia
Patrick Henry Building
1111 East Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Northam:

Once again, Virginia makes the national news. Not for our tough-on-crime stance. Not for our compassion for victims of horrific atrocities. Not for championing public safety. Instead, violence in the Commonwealth continues to make headlines. The last year has seen rioting in Richmond, unrest at the U.S. Capitol, and shootings at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. People are concerned about the security of their families. And now, to add insult to injury, the Virginia Parole Board—who serve at the pleasure of you, our Governor—will release yet another violent offender.

Last week, your infamous Parole Board announced that Gregory Joyner, a vicious, cold-blooded killer serving a life plus 10 years sentence for the rape and murder of 15-year-old Sarah Jamison, will be released on Friday, April 2nd. Joyner confessed to strangling Sarah and burying her in the woods near her parents' house. Her body remained undiscovered and decomposing for two weeks in a shallow grave. Joyner has never shown remorse for his crime, and was denied parole in both 2017 and 2019.

Governor, you continue to support a misguided belief that Virginia should grant parole to these dangerous criminals—rejecting what previous courts had decided was both fair and just. Time and again I have highlighted these outrageous decisions, which are placing murderers, child sexual predators, and violent rapists back into our communities. Now, scattered across the Commonwealth like a minefield set to explode, these criminals once again threaten the safety and security of all Virginians.

Finally, it is extremely troubling that at the same time you launched an independent investigation into some deeply disturbing misconduct of the Parole Board, you held no Parole Board member who engaged in such misconduct accountable. Instead, you chose to terminate a whistleblower who helped expose the wrongdoing. This is sinful. How can you punish someone for doing what's right? For watching out for what's best for Virginia? Isn't that what everyone in your administration is tasked to do? To ensure the safety and security of the Commonwealth?

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Countless members of the General Assembly have brought this matter to your attention. I implore you to press “pause” on Parole Board activity and allow the investigation to proceed. Please remember, Governor, that you represent ALL Virginians, including the victims of violent crime. You owe it to them and their families to show compassion and empathy. Let them know you care about their loss. Honor their grief by ensuring the perpetrators of these crimes—crimes which have altered their lives forever—will serve the sentence that lawfully-seated juries deemed appropriate.

Governor, please make sure your Parole Board serves in a manner befitting the sanctity and history of Virginia. The story of our great nation began here. We are the first and longest serving legislature in the country. We owe it to our forefathers to comport ourselves with honor, respecting the lives of ALL who reside here.

Your attention to this request is greatly appreciated.

Warm regards,



Bill DeSteph