

Bring Marcus Home

Your letter goes into the file the Prisoner Review Board actually reads. It carries more weight than any number of online signatures. Fifteen minutes of your time is the most useful thing you can give this campaign.

Where to send it

Illinois Prisoner Review Board
Attn: Support Correspondence
319 E. Madison St., Suite A
Springfield, IL 62701
Re: Marcus A. Whitfield · DOC #R41827

The DOC number must appear on the letter. Without it, the board cannot match your letter to his file and it will not be counted.

Put these things in

- + **Your full name and mailing address.** Anonymous letters are discarded.
- + **How you know Marcus, and for how long.** Say it plainly in the first sentence.
- + **One specific thing you have seen change.** A single concrete story beats a page of adjectives.
- + **What you will personally do after his release.** A ride to work, a room, a job, a weekly check-in.
- + **A job or housing offer, if you can make one.** On company letterhead if you own a business.
- + **Your handwritten signature.** Sign it by hand even if you typed the letter.

Leave these things out

- **Arguments about guilt, the trial, or the evidence.** The board is not re-trying the case, and this reads as denial.
- **Any mention of the victim or the victim's family.** Nothing good comes from it.
- **Anger at the board, the judge, or the prosecutor.** You are asking these people for something.
- **Sentences copied from this page or the website.** Identical letters get counted once.
- **Claims you cannot personally vouch for.** Write only what you have seen yourself.

One page is enough. Two is the maximum. Handwrite it if your handwriting is legible — handwritten letters read as personal, which is the entire point.

After you mail it, tell the campaign at restorethesentence.org so the family can keep an accurate count going into the hearing.

What a good letter looks like

This is an example of the shape and tone that works. Use it as a model for structure, then write your own version in your own words about your own experience.

March 14, 2026

Illinois Prisoner Review Board
Attn: Support Correspondence
319 E. Madison St., Suite A
Springfield, IL 62701

Re: Marcus A. Whitfield, DOC #R41827

Dear Members of the Board:

My name is James Ellery. I live at 4412 S. Wolcott Avenue in Chicago and I have owned Southside Mechanical Services for nineteen years. I am writing to ask you to grant Marcus Whitfield's petition for clemency.

I met Marcus in 2019 through the HVAC certification program he completed at Danville. I sat on the advisory panel that reviewed the coursework, and I have corresponded with him roughly once a month since then. In seven years he has never once asked me for anything. What he asks about is whether the trade is changing and what he needs to learn before he gets out.

Last spring I sent him a manual on variable refrigerant flow systems — newer equipment than anything he could have worked on before 2003. He sent back four pages of notes and two questions I had to look up myself. That is preparation I rarely see in the young men I hire off the street.

I am offering Marcus a full-time position as an installation technician at \$28 an hour, starting the week he is released. The offer is not conditional and not ceremonial. I need the help, and I would rather hire someone who spent six years preparing for the job.

I understand the seriousness of what brought Marcus here, and it is not my place to argue about it. I am writing because I have watched a man spend years building himself into someone useful, and I believe he is ready. I will make sure he shows up.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

James Ellery
Owner, Southside Mechanical Services
4412 S. Wolcott Avenue, Chicago, IL 60609 · (773) 555-0142