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Dear Chairman David:

Who is Charles Norman? What kind of person is he? Is he a good man or a bad man? Does he belong in prison? Does he deserve to be free? Can people who've never met him, who have only dry numbers in a file to guide them, make a fair and accurate assessment of his suitability for release? I believe the answer is yes, if those people make an effort to get to know him, to find out what character is inside him, if they listen to responsible people who know him best, and base their decision on facts.

Charles Norman is my brother. He is four years older than I am, and I've always looked up to him. He protected and defended my younger brother and me on countless occasions growing up. I daresay few if anyone truly knows him better. I could write a book about all the times my brother revealed his positive character to me, but I want to relate one incident that occurred in prison almost two years ago that serves as an example of what kind of man is my brother.

Christmas Eve 2004. Charlie lives in a building crowded with over 200 of the most dangerous prisoners at Tomoka C.I. In Daytona Beach, many convicted murderers with life sentences and no hope of ever being released, men with nothing to lose. A time of celebration in our society, Christmas in prison is one of the worst of times. One young correctional officer was working in the glassed-in control station while other officers escorted scores of prisoners to the medical building to take their various medications. Charlie was sitting in the day room watching the evening news. The other prisoners were standing around in groups.

An argument over money and gambling started. One huge black man, over six feet tall and 260 muscular pounds, confronted a homosexual couple, one an older, 290-pound black man, the other a younger, thickly-muscled black man, a former Death Row inmate.

All three prisoners were known as violent brawlers. The argument worsened. Other prisoners gathered around and egged them on. The lone correctional officer in the control room was oblivious to what was going on, busy doing paperwork. The men were squared off in the hallway next to the TV day room. The two homosexual lovers held garbage can lids. Their opponent, Tom, the other huge man, threatened to beat them both. The 290-pound man spit on Tom, infuriating him.

Someone handed Tom a foot-long shank, a sharpened metal blade. The fifty or so onlookers gasped and stood back, realizing that anyone can be killed when a knife comes out.

My brother heard the sudden silence, got up, and saw one man with a long knife advancing toward the other two, who were backing up with nowhere to go. Some men began encouraging Tom to kill them.

Charlie knew all three men. He'd helped Tom with legal work, was respected by him, but had also seen him knock out big men with both fists in fights, and knew how dangerous he was, what a volatile temper he had.

This is the kind of man my brother is. He pushed through the crowd, walked up beside the man with the knife, put one hand on his shoulder, one on his wrist, and said to him, "Tommy, you don't want to do this." Tom told him to stay out of it, he was going to kill them, they'd spit on him. My brother held onto his wrist, continued to talk to him, told him

they weren't worth it, it was Christmas, what would his mother think when she heard he'd killed two men over a gambling debt.

The man allowed Charlie to turn him around And walk down the other hallway. He allowed my brother to convince him not to kill the other two. Charlie told the other two to go back to their cell, and they did. The crowd broke up. The excitement was over.

When my brother recounted this incident to me over the telephone later, I was shocked and frightened by how close he himself came to being killed, how easily it would have been for that enraged man to turn on him and stab him to death. But Charlie didn't even think about it. He acted, when no one else would, and averted a bloody, murderous attack. I asked Charlie why he did it, took that risk, when he could have turned away and stayed out of it. He calmly told me that he'd seen too much death, too much blood, too much pain in prison, that he had no choice but to stop it. He was probably the only one who could have stopped it with a favorable outcome. And he did.

When we were kids, and my mouth would get me in trouble, when bigger boys would jump on me and start to pound me to a pulp, my brother Charlie never hesitated jumping in and bailing me out. Now he has been in prison for over twenty-nine years for a crime I am certain he did not commit. During that time I have been married to my wife Sandy, raised two children to adulthood, and now enjoy my grandchildren. Charlie has never had that. He has endured and survived a hell on earth that, thank God, few of us can even imagine. Once I asked him how he did it, served all that time, and he told me, "You do it like a man."

That is my brother. He told me, "You have to make a few big decisions in life, what kind of person you're going to be, and that eliminates a whole lot of other little decisions later on." That is so true.

Charlie Norman is a good man. He does not belong in prison. He deserves to be free. I believe that were you to actually meet my brother, sit down with him, shake his hand, look him in the eye and talk with him, you would be convinced, as are many other decent, responsible people, that my brother presents absolutely no risk to society, that instead he has much to offer the world, and is willing to be a positive agent, as he has proven over and over again in prison.

He has not only helped many others, but he has saved lives on several occasions. Twenty-five years ago, he talked another prisoner out of slinging gasoline on a guard and setting him on fire. That tormented, angry prisoner later accepted Christ, became a committed Christian, and turned his life around. Had not my brother stepped forward, one man would have suffered a horrible, fiery death, and the other would have gone to Death Row. That is my brother.

Those facts aren't in that inmate file in front of you when you decide my brother's fate on December 13th, but I feel you need to know them, to know what kind of person is before you. I have repeatedly listened to people who didn't even know my brother spout outright lies about so-called events that purportedly occurred over thirty years ago, and be believed by people in authority who should know better. I believe that if you look closely at the facts, at what so many others already know and believe, there is only one conclusion to be reached, that Charles Norman should be freed immediately.

Sincerely,

Danny F. Norman