



August 13, 2018

To Governor Roy Cooper,

I am writing this letter to advocate for the urgent release of Ms. Crystal Mangum as the court considers the facts of her appeal this week.

Like many Americans, I first came to know of Crystal through her involvement in the Duke Lacrosse case. At the time, I was also a student at Duke University and, that same year, would also experience sexual assault at the hands of a group of men. I connected with Crystal almost a decade later, in July 2017, while working on a project advocating for survivors of sexual violence. From that point, we developed a friendship, corresponding regularly, and were eventually able to meet in-person while she was incarcerated at Southern Correctional Institute. In the time I've known her, I've learned that Crystal - like many women serving time for surviving a violent relationship--wants more than anything to be reunited with her three beautiful children, who are all growing up apart from one another and without their mother in North Carolina and other parts of the country.

Last week, I mailed you letters from over 100 individuals who learned of Crystal's circumstances via my project and respectfully request her release. Today, I make that same request on behalf of Essie Justice Group, an organization based in Oakland, CA that supports women who are impacted by the criminal justice system. In our work at Essie, we've heard from thousands of women across the country about the devastation that incarceration causes to families and communities, and we know that Crystal's family and community are no exception. In my own experience surviving and healing from sexual violence, I also learned all too well about the devastation it causes. In Crystal's case, you have the opportunity to take a powerful stance against both in support of survivors.

Since she has been in prison, Crystal has worked hard to improve her circumstances and serve others. She is studying business and hopes to eventually launch her own non-profit serving at-risk youth and survivors of sexual violence. She hopes to be a powerful role model in the lives of her three children. Given her work ethic and commitment to her family, I have the utmost confidence in and commitment to ensuring Crystal's long-term success. I urge you to have compassion when considering the next course of action for Ms. Crystal Mangum. I know she will take every opportunity to do good for herself and for others.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact me at 510-414-3514.

Respectfully,

Nana Duffuor (on behalf of Essie Justice Group)  
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