

January 10, 2017

The Honorable Terence R. McAuliffe
Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia
1111 East Broad St.
Richmond, Virginia 23219

**Re: Application for Executive Clemency for
Ricky Jovan Gray**

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

We write to encourage you to commute the death sentence of Ricky Jovan Gray, who is scheduled to be executed on January 18, 2017. As professionals in fields devoted to mental health; treatment of and advocacy for victims of violence and sexual abuse; and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse and addiction, we urge you to recognize the impact these factors had in Mr. Gray's life.

We have reviewed the attached statement of facts about the history of sexual and physical abuse inflicted on Mr. Gray since childhood, and his resulting life-long substance abuse and drug addiction. While the account of Mr. Gray's life depicts especially severe and prolonged abuse, the cycle of abuse, neglect, and deterioration—"self-medicated" by substance abuse—is familiar to us. We have learned through experience that this can cause devastating long-term consequences, and so we are committed to working to interrupt this cycle through early intervention and appropriate treatment. In Mr. Gray's case, his abuse and trauma were left unaddressed and predictably led to profound despair and other serious trauma symptoms, drug addiction, and the drug use that resulted in the tragic crimes he committed with Ray Dandridge.

As a leader committed to making adequate mental health care accessible to all citizens, and to recognizing and preventing dangerous substance abuse, you are aware of the critical need

for early intervention in cases like Ricky Gray's. Mr. Gray is an important example of someone who needed an advocate to intervene while he was a small child and subjected to terrifying abuse at the hands of his family members, or when he was a young boy and desperately turned to drugs in an attempt to numb the painful impact of this abuse. But now we all must face the stark truth that no one did intervene. We urge you to consider this failure and intervene to commute Mr. Gray's sentence from death to life imprisonment.

The crimes committed by Mr. Gray and Mr. Dandridge were horrible and deserving of strong punishment. But it also is beyond dispute that Ricky Gray was the victim of horrific sexual and physical abuse—starting at a very young age and continuing throughout his childhood, which led to drug abuse, crippling addiction, and ultimately criminal behavior. In these circumstances, we offer our support for a decision to commute Mr. Gray's sentence to life imprisonment without possibility of parole.

Sincerely,

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Inspector General for Virginia Department of Behavioral
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2004 to 2010

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