How to Write a Support Letter

You're writing this because you know this person, and you can say something about them the Board can't get from a file. Your letter is where the Board learns what's actually waiting for them if they're released — not just that you want them home.

Should you write one?

Yes, if you can speak specifically to real changes you've seen and to concrete support you can offer. Immediate family, close friends, and people offering a job are the strongest voices.

A caution: skip letters from young children, and think twice before writing one just to add to the pile if you don't know this person well or haven't seen them in years. A packet with six strong, specific letters is worth more to the Board than one with twenty thin ones — quality beats volume every time.

What your letter needs

- Your name and contact information
- Today's date
- The applicant's full name and TDCJ ID#
- Your relationship to them
- What they were like before incarceration
- Specific changes you've personally observed since — not general impressions, actual examples
- Concrete support you'll provide if parole is granted: a place to live, transportation, help finding work, food, clothing, financial help — be specific
- Your signature

What to leave out

Don't simply write that you want them home or that your family needs them back. The Board already assumes your family wants them home — that's not new information. What it needs to hear is what's changed and what will be waiting for them. Show it, don't just say it.

Where and when to send it

Send one signed copy to the applicant, and a separate signed copy to:

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TDCJ Parole Division, Attention: Correspondence
P.O. Box 13401, Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711
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Confirm this address with the applicant's Institutional Parole Officer before mailing — it changes for Special Review and clemency requests.

Aim to have it received **at least six months and one day before the review** for a first parole review (four months for later reviews). That is the minimum; the Board prefers a **full year before a first review** (six months before later reviews). If you miss that window, send it to the applicant instead so they can hand-deliver it to their Institutional Parole Officer.

Checklist before you mail it

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[ ] Your contact information is on the letter
[ ] Dated
[ ] Applicant's full name and TDCJ ID# included
[ ] Your relationship stated
[ ] At least one specific, observed change described
[ ] Concrete support offered (not just goodwill)
[ ] Signed
[ ] Copy sent to the applicant AND to the Board address above
[ ] Mailed in time to arrive before the case-pull date
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Other Resources

- **TX-CURE** (Texas CURE) — statewide criminal-justice advocacy nonprofit: www.texascure.org · (214) 348-0293
- **TIFA** (Texas Inmate Families Association) — support and advocacy for families of incarcerated people, runs its own support programs for family and friends: www.tifa.org · (512) 371-0900
- **Board of Pardons and Paroles, Office of the Ombudsman** — for family/friend questions about the parole process: (512) 406-5864 · bpp-pio@tdcj.texas.gov

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