

Some Guidelines for Letters at Sentencing

DO explain immediately the writer's relationship to the defendant, in plain terms. For example, "I am X's mother;" or, "X has been my best friend since eighth grade."

DO focus the letter quickly on one or two anecdotal experiences, told as a concise story, that reveal an important and admirable trait. A short story that reveals true kindness, for example, is much more effective than effusive assurances that "X is the kindest person I ever have met."

DO describe for the Court the most important of the defendant's positive qualities and contributions to their family and community.

DO place emphasis on the support (emotional and financial) that the defendant continues to have in his family, his circle of friends, his place of worship, his employment, his community, or any combination of these.

DO type the letter neatly in type that is at least 12 points. Ideally, the type size should be 13 or even 14 points.

DO thank the Judge politely for considering the letter.

DO NOT suggest that the defendant is not guilty.

DO NOT minimize the defendant's guilt.

DO NOT tell the Judge exactly what sentence to impose.

DO NOT write a letter exceeding one and one half pages.

All letters should be addressed to the Judge, *but sent to me*. I will review all letters; reject unhelpful letters, and then forward to appropriate number of good letters to the Court for its benefit at sentencing. Writers should send them to me at least 20 days before sentencing, if possible.