

Dear Governor Abbott and members of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles,

I am writing to ask you to grant clemency to Texas death row prisoner Rodney Reed, who is scheduled for execution on November 20, 2019. I believe that Rodney is innocent of the crime he was convicted of.

Rodney Reed was convicted of the 1996 murder of Stacey Stites in Bastrop, Texas. His conviction was based solely on semen DNA evidence. No other physical evidence linked him to the murder. Rodney has maintained that he and Stacey were having an affair, which accounted for the presence of his DNA.

During the trial, important evidence of Rodney's innocence was not presented. This included hidden eyewitness testimony, misleading expert witness testimony, and the failure of the defense to call either an alibi witness or the multiple witnesses who could have testified to the affair between Stacey and Rodney.

Over the years, evidence continues to point to Stacey's then-fiancée and former Giddings police officer Jimmy Fennell, Jr. as the perpetrator of this crime. Even members of Stacey's family- including Heather Stobbs, Sherry Everitt, Judy Mitchell, Arica Wiederhold, Tina Curtiss, John Leston, Brenden Campbell, Jeffery Holcomb, Mandie Wiederhold, and Ray Horton- believe that Fennell is guilty of the murder of their family member. Witness testimony and DNA evidence point to the involvement of Fennell's known associates David Hall and Ed Salmela.

Fennell gave conflicting accounts of where he was on the night of the crime. He claimed to be home with Stacey. But in a statement from Fennell's close friend Curtis Davis, a former Bastrop Sheriff's Office deputy, Davis stated that Fennell told him that he was out drinking the evening before Stacey was killed. This statement raised issues of a Brady violation- as it appears to have been suppressed by the prosecution. This evidence prompted the courts to order a new hearing in the Bastrop District Court held in October 2017.

At that hearing, evidence was presented that cast doubt on the time of the death given by the prosecution at trial. Renowned forensic pathologist Michael Baden, M.D. testified in the hearing that, "In my opinion, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, she was dead before midnight" the night before her body was found. Other forensic experts have submitted affidavits that the original time of death is inaccurate, which would make it impossible for Rodney to have murdered Stacey.

In 2013, Texas passed a law to provide habeas corpus relief in cases where a conviction based on testimony provided at trial by an expert witness is later changed by that witness. At trial, the original examiner, Roberto Bayardo, falsely testified that Rodney's semen could not be more than 24 hours old at the time of her death. In 2012, Bayardo recanted his trial testimony, including his claim that Stacey was raped. At the 2017 hearings, Baden testified that there was "absolutely no evidence" of rape.

Rodney has asked for new DNA testing on several crucial pieces of evidence- including the belt that Stacey was strangled with- which have never been tested for DNA. These tests could very well prove Rodney's innocence. The Texas legislature has recognized the importance of pre- and post-conviction DNA testing. SB 122, passed in 2011, was intended to greatly expand DNA testing.

In 2013, you, supported a bill for pre-conviction DNA testing, saying, "*Texans may disagree about the death penalty, but one thing all Texans can and should agree upon is that no innocent person should be executed in Texas.*"

I am asking that you stand by your words and stop the execution of an innocent man. I am asking that you support DNA testing and a new trial in this case. I am asking that you spare the life of Rodney Reed.

Sincerely,

Name:

Signature:

Street Address:

City, State, Zip: