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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
HARRISBURG

April 17, 1989

Charles H. Zimmerman, Superintendent  
State Correctional Institution  
P.O. Box 244  
Graterford, PA 19426

Dear Mr. Zimmerman,

Over the past months, I have been in communication with Mr. Thomas Martin, F8255, an inmate at Graterford Correctional Institution, concerning a proposal that he work, from his prison cell, as an unpaid volunteer for the Saint Lucy Day School for the Visually Impaired in Philadelphia. Mr. Martin has developed the proposal in cooperation with the Principal of Saint Lucy's, Sister Judith Ann, who supports the idea enthusiastically. He would, after his work day ends, be transcribing into Braille format the consumable classroom materials such as worksheets, exercises, etc., for which the school has a critical, and never-ending need.

In order to pursue this project, Mr. Martin needs certain equipment and materials, and I urge you to permit him to purchase them: a Smith Corona PWP-80 typewriter and accessories; a small laptop computer with rechargeable batteries, along with its programs and accessories; and a Braille printer and its supplies. In addition, he must be able to send and receive by mail, from the school, the necessary Braille computer disks.

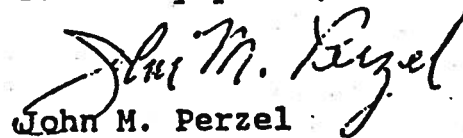
I too, am much impressed with this proposal. It appears to be an example of genuine rehabilitative, rather than self-serving, effort on the part of an inmate; it is to the benefit of a clearly worthwhile charitable cause; it will cost the Department next to nothing (Martin is even prepared to reimburse the institution for any electricity he consumes.); and it sets a marvelous example of an inmate accepting the responsibility for transforming his life in a positive direction, even while incarcerated. It seems to me

that this is exactly the kind of initiative, among our prison population that we should strongly support.

Mr. Zimmerman, I do hope you will extend your fullest cooperation in this matter. I sincerely believe that this kind of activity, inmates taking responsibility for their own rehabilitation and returning value to the community, all at little or no expense to the taxpayer, is the direction in which constructive prison reform must evolve.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely yours,

  
John M. Perzel

JMP/hmw

c.c. Sister Martha Francis, I.H.M.

DAVID S. OWENS JR.  
COMMISSIONER



CHARLES H. ZIMMERMAN  
SUPERINTENDENT

ADDRESS REPLY TO:  
SUPERINTENDENT  
BOX 246  
GRATERFORD, PA 19426-0246

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
STATE CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION AT GRATERFORD, PA  
AREA CODE: 215-489-4151

May 18, 1989

John Perzel, Member  
7330 Frankford Avenue  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19136

Dear Representative Perzel,

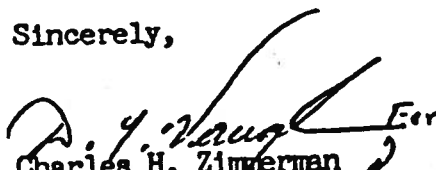
I have been evaluating a request by Thomas Martin, F-2855, regarding a proposal, that he transcribe into Braille consummable classroom materials. You wrote a letter of support on April 17, 1989.

To update you on our progress, I have received information from an existing program which is run by the Department of Corrections in Nebraska. The supervisor of that program informed me that the equipment Mr. Martin is requesting could be used for gaming and gambling. This is our concern with all computers in Correctional Institutions. Additionally, the process Mr. Martin describes sounds like double work in that he would be using a Smith-Corona PWP-80 to lay out work and then emboss the Braille characters manually.

At present, I am informing Mr. Martin that we will approve the manual Braille machine, but the Smith-Corona PWP-80 cannot be approved. The concept of his program is sound and commendable and has our support.

Please advise if you would like additional information or discussion. I appreciate your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

  
Charles H. Zimmerman  
Superintendent

CHZ:dn

cc: Commissioner Owens  
Deputy Stachelek  
File