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Honorable Michael J. Baumgartner
Ogemaw County Circuit Court
806 W. Houghton Avenue
West Branch, Michigan 48661

May 15, 2013

Your Honor,

I am writing in concern of Neal Erickson. I have known Neal professionally and personally for 17 years. In that time I have only known Neal to have a very positive influence on our school district's students, staff and families. He devoted his time and heart to educating our youth in science, computers and music during the day. After school hours he filled his free time extending his help by participating in Band Boosters, Science curriculum meetings, Technology curriculum meetings, Educational Support Programs, running concession stands for middle school sporting events, Ogemaw Heights High School drama productions and also playing the piano for the local Lutheran Church in Rose City.

I am aware that he made some extremely poor decisions in carrying on an inappropriate relationship with a past student of his. I believe the loss of his teaching certificate and the parole restrictions that will limit his freedoms for the rest of his life are steep enough of punishments that a long incarceration term is not warranted on top of that. His young family depends on his support at home and a long absence from that will be a struggle for them.

Our community's children are not at risk of Neal's presence – he is not a predator. Rather he found a strong emotional tie to one particular individual who was too young to be experiencing that type of relationship. The ongoing friendship that the pair had beyond the years of reported sexual activity between them and the fact that the victim did not file the complaint is strong indication that the victim was consenting. Also, the person who was sitting on the evidence for years must not have thought that Neal was a detriment to our societies youth, or it seems that they would have turned it in earlier.

When you determine Neal's sentencing, please consider the great teacher that Neal was to the over 1,000 students that he worked with, of which, not a single one has filed a complaint against him.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Scheel

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