

4006 Kildrummy Dr
Durham, NC 27705
January 8, 2007

XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXADDRESSXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear Mary Easley:

On October 5, 2006 a car came barreling through a red light at a speed of around 100 miles per hour. In the driver seat was a convicted felon fleeing from a police officer who had not yet given chase, but had flashed his blue lights. Passing through the green light of this intersection at the exact same time was my mother, Lisa Knelson. She was likely just relaxing and gleefully listening to some music in her white Toyota Rav4. Whether she had time to look to the left and see her death coming before she was pummeled a good sixty feet from the intersection, no one will ever know. There were no reports of brakes screeching by witnesses, so it is likely she was crushed before she had time to realize what had happened. According to one article in *The Raleigh News and Observer*, she was killed almost instantly. Did that "almost" provide enough time for her to think about her family, and how she could never say goodbye to them? After the car had skidded off the road and into a house, the driver of the speeding vehicle fled the scene, leaving her dead body behind and enclosed by razor-sharp metal.

The driver of the red Honda Passport was twenty nine year old Shawn Maurice Powell, who is currently awaiting trial after his bail was set at one million dollars. The problem, though, is that Powell should have been in prison and should never have had the opportunity to steal a car in Winston Salem and kill my mother in Durham. Powell was previously charged with over one hundred crimes in the last twelve years according to police records, yet he was let out of prison again and again.

Most recently, he was convicted of first degree sexual offense with a child in Ohio in July 2005. He was released on probation and returned to his home in Durham, where he was under the supervision of probation officer Roscoe Hager. Hager was responsible for making sure Powell attended sexual offender and drug treatment programs. By February, Powell violated his probation by failing a drug test, not reporting to the assigned classes, and not checking in with Hager. Hager reported the violations to the Interstate Compact Office in Raleigh, but unfortunately did not request a warrant at that time. Here, a probation officer failed to take action to try to get a probation violator back in prison. If violating probation is permitted without consequence, then why would criminals on probation follow their terms? In April, Hager did request a warrant from Ohio, but for some reason they did not grant it and only ordered close supervision, and apparently the interstate compact office was okay with that. When requesting the warrant, Hager did not report that on three occasions since the Ohio conviction, Powell failed to report to court for driving with a revoked license. In Ohio, an arrest warrant was issued for Powell on August 18, 2006, but no one in Raleigh was notified of this due to a lack of communication and laziness.

It is blatantly clear that the judicial system is broken in more ways than one. Powell was not hard to find and violated his probation numerous times, which under normal circumstances would lead to a warrant for his arrest. This cumbersome process of transferring interstate warrants needs to be revised. Probation officers also need to be more carefully selected and need to have more pride in their work. It is evident that Hager did not do his job thoroughly. One action I suggest you take is to make sure that there is a review of the Interstate Compact Office in Raleigh. More importantly, a new interstate compact needs to be created so that if a warrant is requested with valid evidence for the need of it, the other state involved must grant and transfer the warrant within a certain period of time, such as two weeks. It should be easier for probation officers to directly obtain warrants from other states. New legislation is required so that this system does not fail again and so that other families do not have to experience a similar loss.

I believe that my father, Mark Knelson, sums it up best when he says, "I just think it's sad that anybody's life can be taken by somebody who should be incarcerated." My father also stated, "The fact of the matter is it's difficult to blame him (Powell) because he's demonstrated so many times he's not a responsible person. It's really up to us, society, to keep him in a place where he can't hurt people."

This is my plea for you to take action and to change the Interstate Compact so that as a result innocent victims are not harmed because a warrant is not transferred in due time. After review of the Interstate Compact, it is evident that changes were made due to a previous failure and death of a twenty-four year old named Stephanie Tuthill between the states of Maryland and Colorado. With a little effort and a few phone calls, this compact could be revised to include more detail about the transfer of warrants. To discuss this change, contact Robert Guy at (919) 716-3101, the commissioner of the Interstate Compact Office.

My father will never again kiss his wife goodnight or look into her eyes. My family has endured a lot, but we accept my mother's death and know that we cannot change that. What can be changed though is the Interstate Compact and the time allowed transferring a warrant from another state to North Carolina and that is what you need to do so that other families are spared. Please take the appropriate steps here to continue to keep your state and its citizens as safe as they can be. I am looking for answers and would like assistance and a response.

Sincerely,

Robert John Knelson