

# Northwestern

PRITZKER SCHOOL OF LAW  
Bluhm Legal Clinic

Center on Wrongful Convictions

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Today, only five days before Christmas, the Wisconsin Pardon Advisory Board chose to reject Brendan Dassey's clemency petition in an unsigned form letter, without reviewing the petition on the merits.

Had the Board reviewed Brendan's petition on the merits, it would have seen what more than 250 national experts – and millions of ordinary people around the globe – see: a terrible miscarriage of justice.

Now 30 years old, Brendan Dassey has been imprisoned for thirteen years based only on a false confession that is inconsistent with the known facts of the case, has been disproven by DNA and forensic evidence, and was immediately recanted. That false confession was the result of a deeply flawed interrogation of a 16-year-old special education student with profound learning disabilities.

Although the Pardon Advisory Board has stated that it will not consider commutations, Governor Evers is not bound by those rules. He does have the power to issue commutations under the Wisconsin Constitution and should do so when, as here, courts fail to deliver justice. Our partners around the country stand ready to work with the Governor to develop an appropriate process for the review of commutation petitions.

In the meantime, we will continue to work, respectfully but relentlessly, towards the day when this Governor recognizes in Brendan Dassey the gentle, cheerful, and worthy human being whom we have known for twelve years. A good teacher never forgets his most vulnerable students; a good Governor never forgets his most vulnerable citizens.

We spoke to Brendan this morning. While the Board's choice today has caused pain to many around the globe, Brendan wishes to express his profound gratitude – and his Christmas wishes – to his many supporters. He is not giving up hope, and neither are we.

Laura Nirider  
Steven Drizin