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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Stephanie Mash Sykes, Esq.



The Honorable Barack Obama
President, United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Robert Zauzmer, Acting Pardon Attorney
United States Department of Justice
Office of the Pardon Attorney
145 N Street NE, Room 5E.508
Washington, DC 20530

Sally Yates, Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear President Barack Obama:

The African American Mayors Association (AAMA) was launched in 2014 to represent over 500 African American mayors and their 48 million constituents across the United States. We are a premiere organization representing black elected officials, and we focus on empowering mayors in their communities and elevating their voice on a national stage. We strengthen the executive abilities of our member mayors, and we advocate for public policy positions that benefit our constituents.

Mr. President, we applaud and strongly support your administration's significant initiatives to address policies confronting the criminal justice system, many of which disproportionately impact African American men and women who reside in our cities. One such policy is your use of clemency to review and remedy lengthy sentences, particularly where newer law has discredited old sentences. With the abolition of parole in the federal system in 1984, there are extremely limited options for review of sentences, resulting in prisoners not having the opportunity to show they have reformed.

To date, you have beneficially changed the lives of over 900 people, most of who never thought they would ever see life outside of prison walls. You gave them a second chance, allowing them to return to our communities to show they can be productive citizens. Your initiative reinvigorated the policy discussion around widespread incarceration and the proper role the executive can play to alleviate harsh punishments via clemency. This is helping to bring balance to a justice system that for decades has meted out extraordinarily lengthy sentences that often have not fit the crime.

Mr. President, we as mayors have witnessed firsthand the devastation drugs have caused, but we also bear witness to the harm that has come from the war on drugs. Harsh and lengthy sentences have snatched mothers from children, men from loved ones, furthered the destabilization of families and communities in our cities, and caused the displacement of our constituents in federal facilities throughout the country.

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Because of the slow pace of legislative change, correcting the injustice of severe, fiscally unsound and often racial discriminatory sentences through clemency is imperative.

We know that you have set forth specific criteria for release pursuant to the clemency initiative, including a ten-year threshold, conviction of a non-violent offense, and having a clean institutional record. We want you to know that we welcome back to our communities all those who no longer present a threat to society, whether they fit all the parameters of the criteria or not. This would allow consideration of deserving candidates whose prison term may not have reached ten years, those whose crimes may have been misleadingly not characterized as non-violent, as well as a serious consideration of increasing numbers of elderly applicants who have aged out of criminality.

The spiraling growth of the prison population must be stunted. We reject the "lock 'em up and throw away the key" narrative, and recognize the executive power of clemency as a key safety valve in correcting the injustice of harshly severe, fiscally unsound and often racially discriminatory sentences.

It has often been said that "each of us is more than the worst thing we have ever done." We believe in mercy, forgiveness and fairness.

We respectfully submit the attached list of clemency petitions to you from individuals whom we would welcome back into our communities. We feel that special consideration be given to certain categories of applicants as well, such as the elderly and women. There are also non-citizens, some of whom wish to return to their home countries, where our tax-paying citizens are paying for their continued incarceration. Our staff has reviewed the petitions of each of these candidates, and we implore you to give them consideration as you wind down the last two months of your historic presidency. They may or may not come from or plan to return to our specific cities, but because circumstances are similar across the board in Black America, we are united in calling for their release.

Sincerely,

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings Blake
City of Baltimore, Maryland
AAMA Member, Clemency Initiative Chair

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On behalf of the following signatories:

Mayor Sly James
Kansas City, Missouri
AAMA President

Mayor Steve Benjamin
Columbia, South Carolina
AAMA Immediate Past President

Mayor Petrella Robinson
Town of North Brentwood, Maryland

Mayor Tony Yarber
Jackson, Mississippi

Mayor Toni Harp
New Haven, Connecticut

Mayor Patrick Green
Normandy, Missouri

Mayor McKinley Price
Newport News, Virginia

Mayor Lovely Warren
Rochester, New York

Mayor Lee P. Walker
Landover Hills, MD

Mayor Bradley Sellers
City of Warrensville Heights, Ohio

Mayor William Johnson
Holly Hill, South Carolina

Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson
Gary, Indiana

Mayor Bill Bell
Durham, North Carolina

Mayor Kevin Johnson
Sacramento, California

Mayor Leon Rockingham
City of North Chicago, Illinois

Fmr. Mayor Johnny Ford
Tuskegee, Alabama

Mayor Wayne Hall
Hempstead, New York

Mayor Mario Avery
Fairburn, Georgia

Mayor Jacqueline Goodall
Forest Heights, MD

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Clemency Petitioners:

Sean Andre Wilson (Fed. Reg. #52945-080 F.P.C. Lewisburg, PA). Filed petition for Clemency on May 17, 2016 with the Office of the Pardon Attorney.

Alice Johnson, Mandatory Life Without Parole, 1st Offender
<http://www.candoclemency.com/alice-marie-johnson/>
<https://www.change.org/p/barack-obama-grant-clemency-to-alice-marie-johnson-serving-a-life-sentence>
<http://clemencyreport.org/alice-marie-johnson/>

William Underwood, Mandatory Life Without Parole, 1st drug offender (Attorney Nkechi Taifa)
<https://www.change.org/p/president-obama-28-years-is-too-long-free-our-father-william-underwood>
<http://inprison.net/documentary.php>
<http://inprison.net/news/post.php?s=2016-09-20-senator-cory-booker-is-the-real-deal>

Mark Myrie, 10 years, 1st Offender (Attorney Nkechi Taifa)
non-citizen – upon commutation wants to be deported back to Jamaica
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buju_Banton#U.S._drug_charges

Michelle West, Mandatory Life Without Parole, 1st Offender
<http://www.candoclemency.com/film-michelle-miquelle-west-revolt-tv/>
<http://fusion.net/story/332265/michelle-west-prison-clemency/>

Robert Shipp, Mandatory Life Without Parole, 1st drug offender (Attorney Mark Osler)
<https://www.change.org/p/clemency-for-robert-shipp-life-sentence-at-age-20-for-5-months-involvement-in-nonviolent-drug-conspiracy-has-served-23-years>
<http://www.candoclemency.com/robert-shipp-life/>

Cheryl Howard, Mandatory Life Without Parole
Possession with Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine and Conspiracy
<http://www.candoclemency.com/cheryl-howard/>

Michael Holmes, Mandatory Life Without Parole
<http://www.grantmichaelholmes Clemency.com>
<http://www.candoclemency.com/clemency-michael-holmes-serving-life/>
<https://www.change.org/p/president-obama-clemency-for-michael-holmes>

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LaShonda Hall , 45 years, 1st Offender
Drug Conspiracy

<https://www.change.org/p/president-barack-obama-clemency-for-lashonda-hall>
<http://www.candoclemency.com/lashonda-hall-45-years/>

John Knock, Mandatory Life Without Parole, 1st offender for marijuana

<http://www.johnknock.com>
<https://www.change.org/p/grant-clemency-to-john-knock-life-in-prison-for-marijuana>

Eric Wilson, Mandatory Life Without Parole (Attorney MiAngel Cody)
Conspiracy to distribute drugs

<https://www.change.org/p/president-barack-obama-grant-clemency-for-police-torture-survivor-eric-wilson-who-will-die-in-prison-for-a-nonviolent-drug>

Troy Lawrence, Mandatory Life Without Parole (Attorney MiAngel Cody)

Steve Liscano, Mandatory Life Without Parole (Attorney MiAngel Cody)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VFTIXUBmiak>

Corey Jacobs, Mandatory Life Without Parole (Attorney Brittany Byrd)

<https://www.change.org/p/potus-corey-jacobs-does-not-deserve-to-die-in-prison-sign-the-petition>

Trenton Copeland, Mandatory Life Without Parole (Attorney Brittany Byrd)

<https://revolt.tv/stories/2016/10/18/buried-alive-praying-lifeline-0700a4d40f>