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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4603

November 21, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to express my support for the clemency application of Ms. Michelle West. I have reviewed Ms. West's clemency application, and I cannot imagine a better 30-year record of rehabilitation and redemption.

Ms. West is 61 years old and has served 30 years of a federal mandatory life sentence. The granddaughter of sharecroppers, and granddaughter and daughter of U.S. Army veterans, Ms. West had no criminal history prior to her federal case. Her federal crimes were drug conspiracy, money laundering, and an aider/abettor role in a drug-related homicide. The shooter was given total immunity for the homicide and ultimately served only 15 months in prison. The conspiracy's kingpin – violent and vastly more culpable than Ms. West – was also given a life sentence. The record in Ms. West's case shows she has no history of violence or use of firearms.

The United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan has written in full support of Ms. West's clemency. And most compelling, the daughter of the homicide victim, Candace Christian-Hunter, also supports Ms. West's immediate release. Ms. Christian-Hunter has submitted a letter to your administration, imploring you to release Ms. West. Similar support comes from a dozen current and retired Bureau of Prison (BOP) staff, who have written letters attesting to Ms. West's character and readiness for release. Indeed, Ms. West's BOP file is replete with commendations, awards, memos documenting extraordinary service, and even nominations for monetary recognition. She has worked in UNICOR, served as a suicide watch companion, and is frequently asked by BOP staff to teach resume and pre-release classes for prisoners who will soon be free and seeking to get back on their feet. The present irony is that Ms. West may never be able to use her skills and knowledge for her own reentry.

Moreover, Ms. West's case is a horrific example of how counterproductive and unjust mandatory minimum sentences are. After the U.S. Supreme Court's 2005 decision in *U.S. v. Booker*, a life sentence would not be mandatory in Ms. West's case had she been sentenced today. A sentencing judge would be free to consider mitigating factors in her case – including that she was a single mother, an early high school graduate, and had never been in trouble before – to impose a sentence less than life. But *Booker* is not retroactive, and Ms. West has no other avenues of

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relief. She will die in prison without clemency. Keeping her in prison decades beyond even the sentence she could have obtained in a plea deal is a miscarriage of justice.

Mr. President, as you conclude a historic presidency where you have demonstrated remarkable compassion and empathy for your fellow Americans, I implore you to use your authority to permit Ms. West to return home. Based on the remarkable record assembled for her clemency petition, I cannot think of someone more deserving of presidential mercy.

Very truly yours,



ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Member of Congress