

May 8, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards
Office of the Governor
PO Box 94004 Baton Rouge, LA 70804
Via E-mail to: Matthew.Block@la.gov
Leslie.Chambers@la.gov, govpress@la.gov

Re: Commutations and Clemency during COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Governor Edwards,

As Louisianans continue to shelter in place to slow the spread of COVID-19, our community members held in jails, prisons, juvenile detention facilities, and ICE camps across the state have been forced to endure increasingly dangerous conditions without the ability to social distance, access hygiene supplies or medical care. Many pleas have been made to decrease the current incarcerated population in an effort to save lives and protect public health. Procedurally and politically, you have the ability to authorize the release of thousands of aged, sick, and vulnerable residents from prisons and jails. By far, the easiest group to release immediately are the 145 individuals awaiting commutation. Your signature is the only barrier to freedom for these mothers, fathers, siblings, sons, daughters, and friends. Many of these people have spent decades behind bars and wait for your signature on an application that has been stuck in its final step for months or years.

These applicants are not just numbers. They represent the lives of real people, lives currently in danger from the widespread outbreak of this highly contagious and deadly virus. Some of the individuals awaiting commutation are in such advanced stages of physical disability and age that they pose absolutely no possible threat to public safety. Lloyd West has served 52 years in prison and is in a wheelchair, going blind, and especially vulnerable to the threat of COVID-19 because of his previous battle with throat cancer. Lloyd had no victim opposition at the pardon hearing and has been waiting on your signature since 2017.

Like Lloyd, Gloria Williams has family waiting to house and support her when she is released. After 48 years in prison, Gloria, affectionately known as Mama Glo by the countless incarcerated women she has mentored, is Louisiana's longest serving female prisoner. She is currently at Our Lady of the Lake Regional Medical Center in Baton Rouge, on oxygen to breathe, struggling to survive COVID-19. Her comorbidities, including hypertension and pulmonary nodules, put her at increased risk from the virus she contracted at LCIW. As a DOC patient in the hospital, her family has had to go days without updates on her condition and your signature for her commutation would grant an immediate change to the rights and access her loved ones would have during this terrifying time for her children and sisters. Mama Glo is 74 years old and her commutation was given a unanimous recommendation by the Board of Pardons in July of 2019.

Duong Cao is another incarcerated patient ill with COVID-19, though he could be at a medical center had he been released as recommended. He was transferred to and is currently being

held at Camp J in Angola, a substandard medical facility that puts patients far from access to ventilators or quality medical care. He contracted the virus in DOC custody, but he could have been granted commutation months ago. He needs your signature.

145 people and their families are waiting for you, Governor Edwards, to pick up your pen. Each of these lives is as valuable as yours. We urge you to act swiftly and sign the commutations that have long needed your signature.

Sincerely,

A Community Voice

Aaron Trigg

AAUW

Albert Harper, Jr

Albert Woodfox 14730 Emory Rd. Nola70128

Alissa Zeller

Alpha and Omega Ministries

Amy Holcomb, former LWC employee

Amy Irvin

Andrea Armstrong, Professor of Law

Anna Sacks, Executive Assistant, VOTE

Annie Phoenix, Co-Founder, Operation Restoration

Avis Henderson

Barbara Kaplinsky, Immediate Past President, National Council of Jewish Women, GNO

Barbara Vampran ,Vote

Brenda Caskey

Cammie Maturin, President, H.O.P.E. Foundation

Casey Tatum

Charlotte Klasson, Board President, New Orleans Secular Humanist Assoc.

Cheryl T. Henderson

Chris Spalatin

Christine Breland Lobre, Program Director

Clare Daniel, administrative assistant professor, Newcomb Institute of Tulane University

Clay Latimer, Retired, DCFS Attorney Supervisor

Coleen Murphy, community organizer

Colleen Kane Gielskie, VOTE

Colleen Kissel, Progressive Social Network of Baton Rouge

Connie Cao, sister of Duong Cao with pending clemency application

Corinne Barnwell

Dante Martin, 414Life

Danielle Freeman, Director of Mapfree Quality Care LLC

Darryl Crockett, Member of the New Orleans Workers Center for Racial Justice

David Brazil, Abolition Apostles (Founding Pastor)

Dawana Tyler

Dean Marie Guidry

Debbie Boyd, sister to JDB

Debra Robertson

Debra Sheehan

Denise Davis

Denise Rhodes, Deputy Clerk

Dine Butler

Dionell Perkins, Cook

Donald Arbuthnot, Community Organizer, Vote

Dream Defenders

Drew Stephan, C4 Tech & Design

DT Daigle RN-BC

East Baton Rouge Parish Prison Reform Coalition

Elaine Freeman

Eldine Daniel

Elizabeth Townsend Gard, Professor of Law, Tulane University.

Erica Navalance

Fair Fight Initiative, Inc.

Felton Bellard

Fr. Fred Kammer, SJ, Director, Jesuit Social Research Institute, Loyola University New Orleans

Glenn Burton

Greater New Orleans Unitarian Universalists

Gregory Rhodes

Hazel Shakir

Homero López, Jr.

Ilana Scherl

Ivy Mathis, organizer VOTE

Jairriel Bazile

James W. Craig, New Orleans LA

James & Rita Robertson, Son and Daughter-in-law of Gloria Williams awaiting commutation

Jamila Johnson, Managing Attorney at the Unanimous Verdicts Project

Janet Washington

Janet C. Hoefel, Catherine D. Pierson Professor of Law, Tulane Law School

Jennifer Harding, Organizing Coordinator VOTE

Jennifer Lutterbie

John Adcock, Civil Rights Attorney

John Bennett

Johnny Taylor

Julie Schwam Harris

Justice & Accountability Center of Louisiana

Katie Hunter-Lowrey, Crime Survivor Organizer

Kenneth Mills, concerned citizen

Kiesha Keller , Keller Esther's Haven House

Kristin Emmet, Community Organizer

La.Parole Project

Lance Roux, citizen EBR parish

LA Repeal

Lauren Nguyen, VOTE member

Lian Lucansky

Linda Usdin

Lisa M Shelby Domino 1st 72+

Lorraine Oshee

Louisiana Center for Children's Rights

Louisiana Network for Criminal Justice Transformation

Louisiana Survivors for Reform

Louisiana Violence Reduction Coalition

Maggie Calmes, Last Mile NOLA PPE

Marcus Simmons

Marlena Brue

Marlena Dantley

Martina Moss

Mary Phillips

Mary Smith-Moore, Sister of Gloria Williams awaiting commutation

Melissa Flournoy, Board Chair, Louisiana Progress

Mercedes Montagnes, Executive Director of PJI

Merek Draper

Mica Sloan, Attorney

Michael Stone

Minister Leo Jackson, SS Superintendent, SZBC

Montrell Carmouche, Director of New Orleans Safety and Freedom Fund

Mr. Jonathan Stubbs, Pax Christi USA

Ms. Arimela Shima

Nancy West

Natalia Ventsko

Nola to Angola

Orleans Public Defenders

Our Voice Nuestra Voz

Pamela Freeman, CEO MFQC

Participatory Defense Movement

Paul Troyano

Power Coalition for Equity and Justices

PREACH

Progressive Social Network of Baton Rouge

Rachel Taber

Rae Horton

Reginald Johnson

Reinada Thomas

Rev. Alexis Anderson

Rev. Andrew Greenhaw, St. Paul's United Church of Christ

Rev. Benjamin Groth, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, New Orleans

Rev. Dr. Joe Connelly

Rev. Michaela O'Connor Bono

Rich Family Ministries

Russell Moran, Community Organizer

Ryan Haynie - Haynie and Assoc

Sally J. Kenney, Newcomb Institute, Tulane University

Sarah Gordon, Communications Associate, VOTE

Sarah Jo Fridley, Louisiana resident

Sarah Pritchard, Abolition Apostles (Founding Pastor)

S. Fauria

Sha'Conna Gordon

Shalonda Victorian

Shana Villa

Sheilena R. Andrews

Sheril K. Miller, registered Louisiana Voter and Resident

Shonterria Vigne

Sister Alison McCrary, SFCC, Esq.

Sister Bernie Barrett

SPLC Action Fund

Stella Poindexter, Central La. Coalition of Concerned Women

Susan Kruse

Suzanne-Juliette Mobley

Tamara Jackson Silence is Violence

Tammy Jones

Tammy M Savoie, PhD

The Promise of Justice Initiative

Tia'Lena Ware

Tiara ware

Tim McEvoy, Clinical Instructor, Tulane Domestic Violence Clinic

Tony Bellard

Treston Simon

Trevonya Riggs

Tynisa Berry

Ubuntu Village NOLA

VOTE , Voice of the Experienced

Walesa Kanarek - Domestic Violence Community Advocate

Wan Qi Kong, Orleans Public Defenders

Women With A Vision