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To whom it may concern,

My name is Madeline Goldstein, and I am a Client Advocate with the Center for Appellate Litigation's Youth and Emergent Adult Resentencing (YEARS) Project. The YEARS Project is dedicated to challenging lengthy sentences imposed on young people with the potential to grow and mature. In pursuit of that goal, YEARS has initiated a challenge to the imposition of our state's most severe sentence—life without the possibility of parole (LWOP)—to young people under the age of 21. It was through this effort that I had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know John Moore. In November of 2024, my office reached out to John because we believed he exemplified the argument we were trying to make: that while, at 19, he made a grave mistake that led to his incarceration and sentence to LWOP, his evolution and remarkable positivity over decades in prison prove young people's deep capacity for change. I visited John in February 2025 to interview him for our motion, and we have stayed connected via mail since then. Every exchange I have had with him only further supports and enhances my office's initial impression of him. I recommend him wholeheartedly.

Just being selected for inclusion in the motion is a testament to John's character. Among all the people sentenced to die in prison for crimes committed before they turned 21, John was just one of three we interviewed. Our team was impressed not only by his achievements, but also by the introspection he displayed in his correspondence to us. His self-reflection, where he explained that he was an "impulsive and reckless young man" who has learned to "take old negative patterns of violence and anger and replace them with respect for self and caring for others," exemplified the transformation that modern neuroscience research proves children to be capable of achieving.

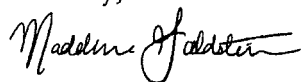
From the very beginning of our correspondence, John has been a sincere, honest, and kind presence. He is incredibly positive, despite his circumstances, and dedicated to staying active in programs and school. In his very first letter to me, he told me that he does not dwell on the negatives of his situation and finds motivation through programming and his loving family. My meeting with John only further confirmed my impression of him from our written correspondence—that he is a devoted father, well-respected leader, and mentor to his peers. Upon my arrival at the visiting room, even a corrections officer commented that John demonstrates model behavior.

I saw this firsthand, as John openly and genuinely answered all my questions. Our conversation focused on the ways he better himself and helps others succeed through his work in the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) and the other programs he leads. His passion for anti-violence programming and mentoring at-risk youth through the Youth Assistance Program (YAP) was evident from the excitement that exuded from him as he talked about ideas he hopes to implement and upcoming events he is planning. John also serves as one of four members of the Inmate Liaison Committee at Elmira—an incredibly selective position that gives him the opportunity to represent the general population in discussions with the prison administration. This position requires excellent prosocial skills and the ability to communicate effectively with both prison leadership and the incarcerated population—skills I could see John has in spades. His collection of achievements, including his recent graduation from college, is truly remarkable given just how competitive these programs are and the level of leadership he has achieved within them. He is not a passive participant; he has devoted himself to them and become a key part of their operations at Elmira.

Beyond just learning about John's remarkable accomplishments, my interview uncovered his harrowing childhood riddled with drug use and domestic violence against him and his mother. I was struck that John never uses his background as an excuse for his actions. We have had in-depth conversations about his emotional impulsiveness as a young person, and how he now dedicates himself to living responsibly and positively. He committed his crime over 30 years ago and has unequivocally transformed himself. My interactions with John have confirmed that his helpful and positive nature is not just a side of him, but rather his way of life. Every day, he wakes up with a goal to help make other people's lives better and be a good example. Since our meeting, John has written to me regularly to ask how I'm doing and to thank me for the work our team is doing, even though we do not represent him. He has a big heart with dreams of opening a crisis center one day to assist women and girls experiencing domestic abuse, like his mother did.

I wholeheartedly support any opportunities John might have to see the parole board or receive a sentence commutation. He has spent decades reflecting on himself and seeking out opportunities to give back, and his children, who are now adults with their own children, await his return home. That 19-year-old boy, who the judge said was permanently incorrigible, is not there anymore. I proudly join the chorus of individuals who may be corresponding with you on behalf of John, and I am ready to provide any support I can give if he is allowed to leave prison at any time in his life. I believe he would have a positive impact on any community he joins. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Maddie Goldstein

YEARS Project – Client Advocate