

February 10, 2025

Governor Josh Shapiro

Governor's Office
501 North 3rd Street
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Commutation Application of Marie Scott

Governor Shapiro,

The undersigned organizations are writing to ask for your assistance in the commutation application of Marie Scott, an incarcerated elder, prior to her Board of Pardons merit review. Ms. Scott is an exemplary candidate for commutation who has been incarcerated for over 50 years for a felony-murder conviction in which she did not take a life that occurred when she was a teenager. Despite decades of demonstrated commitment to improving herself and those around her, including extensive ties to community members outside of prison, the support of SCI Muncy, and an ongoing battle with breast cancer, DOC Secretary, Laurel Harry, opted to withhold a recommendation for commutation in Ms. Scott's application to the Board of Pardons.

Throughout your campaign for governor and during your time in office, you have committed to give effect to second chances and mercy. In 2024, your office supported the appeal of Derek Lee in a challenge to the constitutionality of life-without-parole sentences for felony-murder in the PA Supreme Court. Ms. Scott was 19 years old and a survivor of childhood sexual abuse at the time of her felony-murder offense during which her co-defendant committed a murder during a robbery. Her co-defendant, who was younger than 18 at the time of the offense, has since been re-sentenced and returned to his community. After more than 50 years, Ms. Scott deserves that same opportunity.

Ms. Scott has dedicated herself to helping other women at SCI Muncy for decades. She has strong ties to people and organizations outside of prison, thanks to her efforts to positively impact those around her. Ms. Scott is now 71 years old and facing an ongoing battle with breast cancer for which she recently underwent surgery. The primary justifications given by Secretary Harry for declining to recommend Ms. Scott for commutation are woefully insufficient when compared to the many reasons she is deserving of commutation. Transgressions from more than 40 years ago – with no criminal offenses since then – and minor misconducts from over a dozen years ago – none of which involved violence – cannot outweigh the decades of pro-social work to which Ms. Scott has committed herself, the more than 50 years she has spent in prison for a crime committed while she was a teenager in which she did not take anyone's life, her battle with cancer, and the overwhelming support of the community and those whose lives Ms. Scott has impacted. SCI Muncy – the prison staff and officials who know Ms. Scott best – endorsed Ms. Scott for commutation.

As a former member of the Board of Pardons, you recognize that commutation is appropriate and just in cases where individuals have atoned for past misconduct in prison through long years of demonstrated rehabilitation. You personally voted for the commutation of

many individuals who had similar transgressions from long ago in their records, including one successful applicant whose sentence was commuted even though decades earlier she had spent five years outside of prison following her escape. Consistency, fairness, and the humanitarian purpose of commutation compel a similar result for Ms. Scott.

The commutation system is intended for those like Ms. Scott to be permitted to serve the remainder of their sentences outside of prison. It is an act of mercy to be extended to those who have demonstrated rehabilitation. Marie Scott is the exemplar of who commutation should benefit. She deserves the best chance of receiving the required unanimous recommendation of the Board of Pardons. In denying Ms. Scott the recommendation of the DOC, Secretary Harry has strayed far from the values and vision of your office in recognizing the importance of second chances and mercy. Put simply, Ms. Scott's continued incarceration serves no purpose beyond diminishing those values to which you are committed.

We urge you to speak up on behalf of Ms. Scott and ask that Secretary Harry reconsider her position prior to Ms. Scott going before the Board of Pardons. It is the humane position to take, and it will not only demonstrate that the DOC recognizes that humanity, but also that it recognizes the extraordinary efforts of those like Ms. Scott to better themselves and better the lives of others in spite of their circumstances.

Sincerely,

Abolitionist Law Center
Amistad Law Project
Anton Robinson, Director of the Caritas
Clemency Clinic, Charles Widger School of
Law
Boston University Law School, Antiracism
and Community Lawyering Practicum
California Coalition for Women Prisoners
Cara McClellan, Director Advocacy for
Racial and Civil (ARC) Justice Clinic
Center for Constitutional Rights
Coalition to Abolish Death By Incarceration
FAMM
Human Rights Coalition
Jess Devaney, President, Multitude Films
Let's Get Free

People's Tech Project
Philadelphia Community Bail Fund
Philly Muslim Freedom Fund
Philly Neighborhood Networks
Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP
Campaign)
Temple National Lawyers Guild
The Sentencing Project
University of Pennsylvania Decarceration
Advocacy Project
VietLead
Why Not Prosper
Women Lifers Resume Project
Youth Art and Self Empowerment Project
Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project
215 People's Alliance