

Press Conference Advisory

For Immediate Release: January 10th, 2021

Contact:

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WHO: Brockton Interfaith Community (BIC) a multi-racial, multi-faith, non-partisan coalition based in Brockton and committed to the liberation of all people through faith-based organizing principles.

WHAT: On January 13, 2021 BIC will publicly announce a new organizing initiative: *Second-Chance Justice Campaign for William Allen* to call on Governor Charlie Baker to commute the sentence of William Allen, a Black prisoner – and an incredible, kind, fully-rehabilitated man – who is seeking a second chance after 27 years of incarceration. William was convicted of felony murder and sentenced to life without the possibility of parole based on a jury's finding that at the age of 20 and 1 month he participated in an armed robbery in which another man, in a fit of rage, stabbed and killed a man, all while William was in another room.

We will tell William Allen's story – how he has been left to spend the rest of his life behind bars without the possibility of parole, his tremendous strides in self-development and self-improvement since age 20, and Governor Baker's Parole Board's refusal to even grant a hearing on William's commutation petition filed nearly four years ago. William's crime, felony-murder as a joint venture, could no longer be charged today because of a 2017 decision by our Supreme Judicial Court. The actual killer was released from prison on parole 11 years ago.

For nearly four years, Governor Baker's Parole Board has refused to grant William a hearing where he can demonstrate his worthiness of a second chance. His request is all the more urgent in light of the covid-19 pandemic which is rapidly spreading through Massachusetts prisons. BIC will launch a campaign to educate and empower the public to demand that Governor Baker grant William the opportunity to prove himself worthy of a second chance.

On January 7, 2021, BIC issued yet another request to Governor Baker to grant William a hearing. See attached letter of January 7, 2021.

DATE: Wednesday, January 13th, 2021 **TIME:** 1:00—1:30 pm

WHERE: Pearl Street United Methodist Church, 415 Pearl Street, Brockton 02301

The press conference will be conducted outside in front of the church with speakers at a podium. **All participants must wear masks and observe social distancing. In case of inclement weather, the press conference will be held inside the church.**

PRESS CONFERENCE AGENDA:

- Welcome and why we're here in this moment. **William Dickerson**
- Who is our group, Second-Chance Justice? **Carol Delorey**
- What is Commutation? **Kris McDonald**
- Who is William Allen? Why he is the perfect candidate and should be able to come home-**Peg Newm**
- Action Step: Invitation to attend a series of virtual Teach-Ins about Commutation and William Allen's story beginning in two weeks. **Faith Tobon/Thomas Hatchfield**



January 8, 2021

Governor Charles Baker
Massachusetts State House
24 Beacon Street, Room 280
Boston, MA 02133

RE: William J. Allen
W63210
Petition No. 17-C-08

Dear Governor Baker:

We are leaders of Brockton Interfaith Community who are committed to correcting the unjust sentence of William Allen, a Black prisoner – and an incredible, kind, fully-rehabilitated man – who is seeking a second chance after 27 years of incarceration.

For 4 years, William has waited for the Parole Board to give him a commutation hearing. As a community, we're shocked and ashamed that such a meritorious petition would go so long with no action. It seems incredibly unjust that a process exists in name but is not actually available for someone like William. We believe that you can and want to remedy that. That you can and would, at the least, ensure that William will finally receive the hearing that he so deserves. As the leader of our state, and the one who appoints the Parole Board, we understand that you can make this happen.

This situation took on even more urgency yesterday because William -- who is at high risk for complications due to asthma, lupus, and atrial fibrillation -- was diagnosed with covid-19.

With all of this in mind, we are writing to invite you to a **press conference on Wednesday January 13th, 2021 at 1:00 P.M.** at Pearl Street United Methodist Church, **415 Pearl Street, Brockton** to give you an opportunity to stand with us and publicly announce your intention to grant a hearing to William. If your schedule does not permit you to attend in person, we respectfully ask you to respond in writing prior to the press conference. In any event, **please respond to this letter by January 13, 2021 at 10:00 A.M.**

William was convicted of felony murder based on a jury's finding that at the age of 20 and 1 month he participated in an armed robbery in which another man, in a fit of rage, stabbed and killed a reputed drug dealer, all while William was in another room.

William has led an exemplary life since age 20 as evidenced by his commitment to his Catholic Christian faith, his dedication to serving others, especially people with severe mental illness, and his continuous efforts at self-improvement and education.

1350 Pleasant Street, Brockton, MA 02301
www.brocktoninterfaith.org



William has demonstrated a deep devotion to his faith through his active participation in prison ministry, his service as a eucharistic minister and altar server, his assistance to the prison chaplains, and his work in organizing prayer services for elderly prisoners.

William's singular empathy and humility is evidenced in his work with mentally ill inmates through the Companion Program and in the volumes of praise, not only from correctional staff and volunteers but from his fellow inmates, as shown by many letters of support, evaluations, and letters of appreciation. In 2011, acting purely on instinct and with no regard for his own safety, William intervened to save a female corrections officer who was attacked by a mentally-ill patient at Bridgewater State Hospital. These are the actions of a person who is capable of much more than simply being a law-abiding citizen, they demonstrate the qualities of someone who would be an asset to any community fortunate enough to welcome him in.

We understand that the purpose of your Executive Clemency Guidelines is to "provide a strong motivation for confined persons to utilize available resources for self-development and self-improvement and as an incentive for them to become law-abiding citizens and return to society." Dedication to these principals should be recognized, encouraged, and rewarded.

William is not asking for forgiveness or to have his crime wiped away. He is simply asking for a chance to share his gifts with the world at-large where he can continue to put his faith into action through service to others. The Department of Corrections and an independent evaluator have both deemed him to be at low risk of violence and recidivism. He has a near-perfect disciplinary history, no history of substance abuse, has tremendous support in the community, and a family eager to welcome him home.

William's crime, felony-murder as a joint venture, could no longer be charged today because of a 2017 decision by our Supreme Judicial Court. Our scientific understanding of brain development has progressed to the point where it is clear that 20-year-olds lack the capacity to resist peer pressure, assess risk, and exercise proper judgment. So, too, have we evolved as a society. The Commonwealth gave up on William Allen at the age of 20. Nevertheless, he has proved that he is much better than his worst mistake. Releasing him is a "win-win" -- for society and for William. For too long cases such as this have been ignored and deemed too risky for even a hearing.

William believed you when you promised to, "give strong consideration to a request to commute a sentence of a petitioner who has made exceptional strides in self-development and self-improvement, and would be a law-abiding citizen upon release from custody." In March, 2017, nearly four years ago, he filed a Commutation Petition seeking to have his life sentence commuted to time served.



As people of faith, we believe that no person is disposable. We believe that every person is redeemable. And we believe that there should always be hope and second chances.

We hope that you will join in our righteous fight for justice for our brother William.

The members of Brockton Interfaith Community:
Second-Chance Justice Campaign for William Allen

Teresa Aiello

Carol Delorey

Deb Fencer

Thomas Hatchfield

Jeanne Lafond

Joseph Moore

Peg Newman

Johanna Schnitz

Janice Schuster

Faith Tobon

Sandy Wixted