

Sarah Thompson

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September 5, 2022

Judge Reggie B. Walton
333 Constitution Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20001

To the Honorable Judge Reggie Walton:

I am writing on behalf of my husband, Dustin Thompson. Dustin and I met while attending The Ohio State University in the fall of 2004. We started dating in 2008 and married January 1, 2020.

Dustin is unfortunately a casualty of online disinformation which was rampant during 2020. Dustin had a mild interest in conspiracies when we started dating. He'd watch the occasional video on 9/11 or JFK's assassination, and at the time it seemed like an innocent hobby. As time went on and internet algorithms led him to more and more conspiracies, Dustin began to repeat more and more Qanon & MAGA ideologies. Between 2016 and 2020 they became his core beliefs & his insistence that he 'knew the truth' was slowly starting to deteriorate a lot of his personal relationships. Unfortunately, it got even worse during the pandemic and after he lost his job.

Dustin is not an extremist; he was swept up in the 'stop the steal movement'. He believed Trump's words that the election was stolen. He went to DC on January 6th, 2021, out of curiosity and in his mind, support for the President of the United States of America. He had no malicious intentions and is not the kind of man who would ever purposely put himself in a situation where he felt there was a threat of violence. I was naive to the dangers of the rally, as was Dustin an even law enforcement. He was unfortunately swept up by herd mentality and the energy that day. Ignorance does not excuse his behavior that day, he acted with immaturity and followed the crowd. He didn't think about the consequences of his actions that day. He's regretted his actions every day since. Most importantly, he takes personal responsibility for his actions. He doesn't blame the crowd or the speakers that day.

During Dustin's trial, on April 12th, 2022, Dustin and I were having lunch near the courthouse during the recess. Dustin noticed two Capitol police officers eating lunch on the

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other side of the restaurant. He told me he was thinking about paying their tab as a very small way to start a private amends. When the waiter returned Dustin inquired about the officers' check. The waiter advised they were celebrating a retirement, and quietly brought the checks. Dustin quickly paid the bill before the officers were informed and exited the restaurant. I know this isn't much, but his thoughtfulness that day reminded me of the good man he is and how sorry he truly is on the inside. He wants to do better for himself and others.

Dustin and I have had many discussions about him working on himself and making better choices in the future. He will be continuing to see a psychiatrist and has also agreed to see a counselor for individual therapy and marriage counseling. I have also been in contact with an organization that specializes in helping people understand mental manipulation. He began working with her after his incarceration. I have noticed that he has made great progress understanding how the conspiracy theories are wrong and influenced his beliefs. I have been actively involved in assisting to find resources for him and will continue to do so for as long as he needs the support.

Dustin has been focused on having a positive outlook so he can move on from his mistakes and be a better person going forward. He's ready to move on from conspiracies and focus on building a career and a family. He has job opportunities available and will volunteer for Habit for Humanity if for any reason he is not able to start work quickly. He has friends and family waiting to spend time with him. He has been missed this summer during family croquet games, watching live music with friends, seeing his sister graduate high school and leave for college. He used to have many hobbies prior to the pandemic. With restrictions lifted he'll be able to spend his free time rebuilding relationships and enjoying things like Frisbee golf, antiquing, and camping rather than spending all his time online. He also wants to be home to see his 16-year-old dog again before it is too late.

He's embarrassed and ashamed of his actions, as am I. Dustin has learned from his actions and punishment. He's taking the available classes, serving as a unit worker for his block, and has been a respectful, well-behaved inmate. His priority in Alexandria Correctional Institute has been getting his head straight and returning home as quickly as possible. I truly believe he will hold himself accountable going forward and will no longer act in a reckless, selfish manner. He is a good man and will prove it when he reenters society. Please take all of this into account and consider granting leniency.

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Sincerely,

Sarah Thompson