

Justin Cohen

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Dear Honorable Judge Cooper,

My name is Justin Cohen. I am writing this letter to vouch for the good character of my friend, Macsen Rutledge, as well as to beg the Court for leniency on his behalf. I have known Macs for approximately 25 years. In that time, I have witnessed his devotion to his mother, as a son, his love for his family, his uniqueness as an individual, and his kindness to me, as a friend.

Macs and I have been friends since our teenage years. We remained friends through many good times, and positive events. I knew he was an iconoclastic thinker when he chose to bike around the west coast of the country, while myself and his other friends made the safe choice to go to college after high school.

As older adults, Macs and I grew close when I lived with him and his mother, Marcia, for several years. Those years hold many positive memories for me, living with good friends as I started my career as a school psychologist. Things changed when Marcia was diagnosed with breast cancer. Macs lived with Marcia through many heartbreaking days of her pain. I witnessed him take wonderful and devoted care of his mother, all throughout the end of her life.

I continued to live with Macs after his mother passed away in 2015. During that time, I could see that he was struggling emotionally with the loss of his mother. Macs tried desperately to hold on to the house we all lived in, but was unable to.

I believe this is important context, to give the Court, speaking to the social isolation Macs experienced during the pandemic of 2020. Macs had always been a free-thinking individual, however, I believe that after March 2020, he was highly isolated and lonely when he started interacting more with national politics. At that time, the people he was most likely to be meeting socially and transgressing social distancing guidelines, were primarily individuals of a right-wing political persuasion. During that time Macs and I would talk on the phone to discuss our views of the world. We could still be friends, even when I had a diametrically opposing ideology to his new way of thinking..

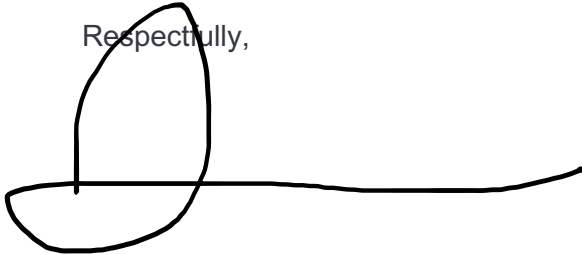
I feel that he became more and more involved in political associations due to his loneliness and desire for connection. I believe that is what led him to the Capitol during the protests on January 6th, 2021.

My understanding is that Macs is charged with entering the grounds of the capitol building on that terrible day in history. I plead with the Court when reading this letter to consider and to understand

that my friend Macs did not intend to commit any revolutionary or seditious violence on that day. I believe that he transgressed a boundary given his trespass, however, I know that he did not do that with the intention of hurting anyone or of destroying anything. I cannot believe he intentionally was caught up and participating in a riot.

In the time since that day, it is my understanding that Macs has eschewed association with political organizations. He has instead committed himself to religious faith. Thank you for reading my letter. If the Court has additional questions for me regarding Macs's character, please feel free to reach out to me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink. It features a large, stylized loop on the left side, followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that extends to the right.

Justin Cohen