

December 12, 2024

Dear President Biden,

On behalf of the undersigned labor unions, we thank you for your extension of clemency to more than 1,500 individuals in home confinement who are deserving of the opportunity to be reintegrated into our society. We are writing today to urge you to continue to use your clemency power to reunite more families, advance racial justice, and allow our neighbors in similar circumstances to reenter the workforce. Granting clemency to individuals who were excluded from some of the reforms in the First Step Act, those still impacted by the crack-vs-powder cocaine sentencing disparity, and those sentenced under outdated “old law” provisions with no current path to release, aligns with your commitment to fairness and justice. Utilizing your clemency power is an opportunity to further demonstrate your commitment to fairness, rehabilitation, and second chances as part of your long legacy of public service.

For too long, harsh sentencing laws and outdated policies have contributed to mass incarceration, with many individuals serving disproportionately long sentences for offenses that, under today’s laws and policy, would result in much shorter terms. These long and outdated sentences are not just a matter of individual hardship but have had profound consequences for working families and communities, who bear the financial and emotional burdens of prolonged incarceration. We know these long sentences do not make our communities safer.

As of November 2024, there were nearly 158,000 people in the federal prison system, making it the largest prison system in the country.<sup>1</sup> This represents a 2% increase since 2020, reversing a seven-year downward trend.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, in 2022, an estimated one in eight people in prison in the U.S. were in federal custody.<sup>3</sup> We must ensure that this upward trend does not continue because strong communities are built on opportunity and stability.

America’s high incarceration rate harms our workforce and economy. As we continue the necessary work to end mass incarceration, prioritizing clemency for people whose sentences would be much shorter today is a step towards addressing the persistent racial disparities in our federal prison population and ensuring people have a meaningful second chance.

We encourage you to further cement your legacy of fighting for working families by continuing to take bold clemency action to strengthen our workforce and our communities.

Sincerely,

**April Verrett, International President, Service Employees International Union (SEIU)**

**Liz Shuler, President, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)**

**Lee Saunders, President, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)**

**Randi Weingarten, President, AFT**

**Mark Dimondstein, President, American Postal Workers Union (APWU)**

**Claude Cummings Jr., President, Communications Workers of America (CWA)**

**Becky Pringle, President, National Education Association (NEA)**

**Cecil E. Roberts, President, United Mine Workers of America**

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<sup>1</sup> Federal prison population characteristics and data may be found on the Bureau of Prisons website. BOP does not specify if the prison population and population characteristics includes or excludes individuals on home confinement or in “other” facilities, percentage breakdowns may not add up to gross total due to missing data: Population Statistics, available at [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population\\_statistics.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/population_statistics.jsp); inmate Statistics, available at [https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics\\_inmate\\_age.jsp](https://www.bop.gov/about/statistics/statistics_inmate_age.jsp).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fwd.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/FWD-NAACP-Federal-Prison-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.