

Date: January 26, 2024

RE: Delivery of Petition to Release Philip Vance from Solitary Confinement.

Dear Commissioner Schnell,

We are writing as people of conscience to lift up a beloved community member Philip Vance. Philip is a caring father, mentor, and artist who is wrongfully incarcerated. Today marks 139 days he has endured solitary confinement for his peaceful participation in the September 3rd protest at Stillwater prison. While he has remained steadfast in his truth, these past months have been incredibly challenging for him.

As you will read in our petition, we believe solitary confinement causes irreparable harm and constitutes torture when used for more than 15 consecutive days as defined by the United Nations. Solitary has a devastating toll on people's mental health, heightening the risk of self-harm and suicide, and can lead to severe trauma. While Philip is a person of hope, he has been deeply impacted by the effects of extreme isolation. He has lost weight, and his mental and physical health are deteriorating. In Philip's words, "the misery of mankind is being alone."

Enclosed you will find a list of 1,005 people hailing from more than 365 zip codes in Minnesota, Philip's home state of Florida, and across the country. You will find both 206 signatures collected by Philip's supporters in person, as well as 799 signatures from an online petition that was circulated through the national Color of Change platform. Of the online signatures 497 come from Minnesota residents, and 302 come from 39 states across the country. All of these people are looking to you to reverse course on the decision to give Philip 180 days in solitary and to return him to the general population immediately. He has already endured such a long period of time, but 41 days less would be impactful.

We know you have built a career in part by calling for the expansion of restorative justice practices. We know the stated values of the Department of Corrections include fairness, dignity, and respect. Surely sentencing Philip to 6 months' time in solitary for bravely protesting degrading living conditions goes against the legacy you want to build and the vision you have for the DOC. We launched this petition in solidarity with Jason Sole, Criminal Justice professor at Hamline University and a former student of yours. His friendship with Philip spans more than 5 years. If you would like to follow up on this petition delivery, please connect with him at [jason@jasonsole.com](mailto:jason@jasonsole.com).

Sincerely,

The Free Philip Vance Campaign friends and supporters