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Congress of the United States
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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**RANKING MEMBER-SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY POLICY,
AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY,
THE BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME AND FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION
AND LIMITED GOVERNMENT**

September 18, 2024

The Honorable Michael L. Parson
Governor of Missouri
P.O. Box 720
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Governor Parson:

I am writing to you today to urgently request that you halt the execution of Marcellus Williams, which is currently scheduled for September 24, 2024. As a lawmaker, I am committed to building a Missouri that is a beacon of justice, and I strive daily to represent the needs and demands of Missourians across the state. For this reason, I am urging you to immediately commute Mr. Williams' sentence and halt his execution

I am urging you to grant Mr. William clemency for his wrongful conviction of the 1998 stabbing of Felicia Gayle. By its own admission¹, the St. Louis County Prosecutor's office engaged in gross misconduct in the prosecution of Mr. Williams' case, violating his right to counsel and his right to due process under the Missouri State Constitution and the United States Constitution. The sitting St. Louis County Prosecutor has raised serious concerns about the constitutionality of Mr. Williams' prosecution as well as his actual innocence of the crime for which he was convicted. These concerns include the mishandling of evidence, a lack of evidence supporting guilt, racially discriminatory jury selection in violation of *Batson v. Kentucky*, ineffective assistance of counsel in violation of *Strickland v. Washington*, and DNA evidence supporting Marcellus Williams' innocence.² No physical evidence collected at the crime scene tied Mr. Williams to the murder of Felicia Gayle, nor was evidence excluding Mr. Williams as the source of DNA on the murder weapon presented at Mr. Williams' trial. Marcellus Williams has always

¹ *Ex rel. Marcellus Williams*, Motion to Vacate or Set Aside Judgment, Docket no. 24SL-CC00422. [2024-01-26 First Motion to Vacate or Set Aside Judgment and Suggestions in Support \(002\) - DocumentCloud](#) (The prosecution improperly removed qualified jurors for racial reasons during jury selection in violation of *Batson v. Kentucky*. In addition, the Prosecuting Attorney is undertaking additional review relating to the investigation of Mr. Williams that, if true, would demonstrate the investigation was intentionally or recklessly deficient, in violation of Mr. Williams's right to due process.)

² *Ex rel. Marcellus Williams*, Motion to Vacate or Set Aside Judgment, Docket no. 24SL-CC00422. https://innocenceproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/2024.01.26-First-Motion-to-Vacate_Filestamped.pdf ("Further, beyond the evidence suggesting Mr. Williams's actual innocence, the Prosecuting Attorney likewise has outlined compelling evidence of constitutional errors during Mr. Williams's trial, including an investigation so deficient it violated due process, ineffective assistance of counsel, and the state's unconstitutional exclusion of Black jurors based on race. This evidence 'of constitutional error at the 'original trial . . . undermines the confidence in the judgment.' Section 547.031(3).")

maintained his innocence and his conviction is based solely on unreliable testimony contradicted by the available physical evidence.

Proceeding with the execution of Marcellus Williams would be a grave injustice and would do serious and lasting harm. Additionally, executing Mr. Williams would go against the wishes of the victim's surviving family. During a judicial conference on August 21, 2024, a representative of Felicia Gayles's family “expressed to the Court the family’s desire that the death penalty not be carried out in this case, as well as the family’s desire for finality.”³ By carrying out this execution, the State of Missouri will further victimize the family of Felicia Gayle, not only by executing an individual who is not responsible for Ms. Gayle’s murder, but also by impeding the investigation into the actual perpetrator of the crime. To proceed with this execution, would be a grave injustice and undermine faith in the legal system.

We must dedicate ourselves to actually achieving the fundamental principles of liberty and justice that animate our laws and our governance. Within the last four decades, four individuals who were on death row have been exonerated in Missouri.⁴ We must not allow innocent individual to be murdered at the hands of the state. You have it in your power to save a life today by granting clemency to a man who has already unjustly served 24 years in prison for a crime he did not commit. I am urging you to use it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cori Bush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

CORI BUSH
Member of Congress

³ [Missouri Supreme Court blocks agreement that would have halted execution of inmate Marcellus Williams, who claims innocence | The Independent](#)

⁴ There have been over 185 exonerations of persons from death row in the United States since 1976. Missouri accounts for four exonerations so far. [Missouri Death Row Exonerees \(madpmo.org\)](#)