November, 2019

To:      Governor Kevin Stitt

2300 N Lincoln Blvd.

Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Re: Commutation of Tondalo Hall

Dear Governor Stitt:

I write to you on behalf of Tondalo Hall, a mother and domestic violence survivor sentenced to 30 years for failing to protect her children from the abuse of her abuser. Her commutation received a unanimous recommendation from the Pardon and Parole Board October 9, 2019, and now sits before you for your signature.

Tondalo Hall was 19 years old when she was arrested for the injuries found on her two youngest children after she took them to the hospital. She was living with the children’s father and her boyfriend, Robert Braxton, at the time. She had also been the victim of Braxton’s verbal, physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse for years. Despite the significant barriers to leaving an abusive relationship, Ms. Hall had saved up and hid several checks and had found a new house where she and her children could live without Braxton. Before they were able to leave, however, Ms. Hall discovered that her children were injured. She took them to the hospital, against the instruction of Braxton, and learned about the severity of their injuries. That hospital visit led to her and Braxton’s arrest.

While in jail pre-trial, Braxton continued to verbally abuse and threaten Ms. Hall with physical violence. The threats only worsened after she agreed to testify against him. During her testimony, the prosecutor began asking Ms. Hall about the abuse she faced from Braxton; however, Ms. Hall was cut short due to the prosecutor’s failure to notify defense counsel of her intention of introducing evidence of the abuse Ms. Hall endured. Braxton was given a plea deal of 10 years probation with time served. He has never spent a day in prison. Ms. Hall signed a blind plea and was sentenced to 30 years in prison.

Fifteen years later, Ms. Hall’s commutation application, was unanimously approved by the Pardon and Parole Board to time served on the grounds that the sentencing judge did not have information about the abuse Ms. Hall faced from Braxton and was not able to consider how that abuse lessened Ms. Hall’s culpability for failing to stop Braxton’s violent actions against their children. The foundation of domestic abuse is the abuser’s goal to maintain power and control over their victim. As the victim of Braxton’s abuse for years, Ms. Hall was not as culpable for her inability to stop the actions of the man who exerted coercive control over her.

While in prison, Ms. Hall has taken advantage of every personal growth opportunity available. She has gone through counseling services and parenting classes, received her GED and cosmetology license, and become a friend and mentor to many other women also incarcerated for failing to stop the crimes of their abusers.

Today, the victims in Ms. Hall’s case, her two youngest children, are among her greatest advocates. Robert and Ukiah Hall appeared before the Pardon and Parole Board, asking the Board to reunite them with their mother. The Halls are ready to be a family again and hope to celebrate Christmas together for the first time in over a decade. I write you today, asking that you sign Tondalo Hall’s commutation and reunite a family too long torn apart by injustice. I ask that you join with Ms. Hall, the victims in her case, her family, her community of advocates, and the entire Pardon and Parole Board in supporting and signing Tondalo Hall’s commutation to, at long last, grant Ms. Hall her freedom.

Respectfully,