Date

The Honorable (name of your judge)

United States District Court Judge

(Name of your judicial district)

(Address of your judicial district)

City of your judicial district, state, zip

Regarding: U.S.—v—Your name and case number

Dear Judge (last name):

My name is Justin Paperny and I’m writing this character-reference letter on behalf of X. Before I begin, let me explain the context in which I’ve come to know X.

I am the founder of the Straight-A Guide Foundation. Through this group, we create programs to teach and inspire people who are going through the criminal justice system. We want to help those people overcome the ancillary consequences of a criminal conviction.

More than 100,000 people go through our program each year. Most of those people are confined in state or federal prisons. Our program includes a comprehensive curriculum that teaches a best-practice way to prepare for success after prison.

X approached members of our team in 2017. Although he hadn’t been charged with a crime, he anticipated that he would face criminal charges. He told us that he wanted to put his past behind him as quickly as possible and start building a life that would allow him to make amends, prepare for a successful journey inside, and return to society successfully.

We offered Danny the same curriculum that we use to teach others. Through that curriculum, we encourage participants to introspect, identify values and goals, and then to create a methodical, step-by-step pathway that will prepare them for success.

Although Danny was not yet in the criminal justice system, he started to embark upon that path of rebuilding. He wrote voluminous response to open-ended questions about how he got into the situation he is in. Danny never blamed anyone but himself for his troubles and accepted full responsibility for the pain his actions have inflicted on victims. Danny strikes me as sincere when he acknowledges that although marijuana is legal in California, it is illegal as a federal crime. Since he broke those federal laws, he acknowledges that he has failed his fellow Americans and he is determined to make things right.

Besides using the course we created to map out a plan for his life, Danny has taken affirmative steps to show that he is authentic. For example, he took the time to research potential careers. He discovered an academy that would allow him to become licensed as a commercial driver. He went through the course, graduated, and found a job as a truck driver. His ability to accept responsibility, prepare for anticipated loss of his liberty, and still remain committed to live as a productive citizen impresses me.

Although I did not know Danny prior to his problems with the law, I’ve worked closely with him since 2017-when he anticipated being brought into the system. I’ve seen his commitment to family and his commitment to living as a productive citizen. From my vantage point, those attributes, together with his total acceptance of responsibility, are consistent with a man of good character.

I hope that you will take these thoughts into consideration as you deliberate over the appropriate sentence.

Respectfully,

Justin Paperny