

Judge Virginia M. Kendall  
United States District Court  
Northern District of Illinois  
219 S. Dearborn Street  
Chicago IL 60604

April 12, 2024

Dear Judge Kendall,

My deep apologies for the tardiness of this letter. My name is Paul G. Vallas. I am the former Chicago Director of the city's Office of Budget and Management, and CEO of the Chicago Public Schools.

My post-Chicago career took me to New Orleans, where I was tasked with rebuilding the public school system after Hurricane Katrina decimated more than 100 school buildings, including the central office.

Due to my rebuilding experience in New Orleans, the Inter-American Development Bank in 2010 recruited me to lead the international coalition tasked with rebuilding the education system after Haiti was struck by the earthquake that killed an estimated quarter of a million people. As a result of that work, I served a decade as finance chair of a prominent nonprofit NGO that supported 50,000 internally displaced Haitians for six years. This NGO continues to provide disaster relief work worldwide, including delivering more than three million COVID-19 vaccinations in eight major US cities, including Chicago.

In my capacity as a consultant during the Obama administration, at the direction of interim U.S. Attorney General Sally Yates, I led a project designed to modernize and create both greater efficiencies and better outcomes in the federal Bureau of Prisons' education and occupational training systems. This effort was the final phase of President Obama's signature criminal justice reform initiatives. We created a vastly improved system that seemed guaranteed to reduce recidivism. Unfortunately, we were prevented from implementing the

plan due the change in presidential administration.

I have known Edward Burke and his wonderful wife, the distinguished Illinois Supreme Court Justice, Anne Burke since **1992**. We became professional colleagues during my tenure as Mayor Richard M. Daley's city Revenue Director, Budget Director, and later, Chicago Public Schools CEO.

My public service assignments in Chicago always involved taking responsibility for institutions that were in crisis and had seen their share of controversies and scandals. My reforms and my willingness to attack "sacred cows" at city hall, and to terminate both ineffective employees and bloated contracts of the politically connected led some members of the "political machine" to shun me, and certainly all of them to tread lightly around me.

Not so Alderman Ed Burke. As Chairman of the City Council Finance Committee, Ed was always supportive of my reforms and encouraged me to do the right thing for the average Chicago citizen, no matter how powerful were the feathers I ruffled. I honestly cannot recall a single time that he ever questioned my judgment, asked me to back down from a politically risky decision, or asked me for any consideration or favor. In short, Ed was a true professional whom I always felt met my standards for ethics. He never once made me feel uncomfortable. Especially in my younger years, when I was new to city hall, Ed's support and advice was very comforting as I learned to navigate Chicago's treacherous political waters.

Ed and I remain good friends, and I have a true affection for him. We have talked periodically over the years, keeping in touch even during the periods my career took me far from Chicago. Most of our conversations included his thoughtful commentary on a project I had undertaken or an article I had published. He often voiced concern for Chicago's budget woes and worried about the impact of various city policies on the average Chicagoan. I know he truly cared, not only for his own constituents, but for all of Chicago and for the success of our great city. His professional impact on Chicago is a great legacy.

Finally, and on a more personal note, Ed and Anne were also very comforting to my wife and I when we lost our youngest son in 2018 at the age of **25**. Given that they also had lost a son too early, their empathy was boundless. Their care, and the time they took to repeatedly express it, made a difference in our time of immense grief.

I am, of course, well aware of the criminal conviction. I have every confidence that Your Honor will make the correct sentencing decision based on the evidence. But I will tell you without hesitation, that given my years of first hand observation of Ed's body of civic and charitable contributions - and those of his wonderful wife who is no doubt devastated by the trial's outcome - Ed is worthy of whatever leniency you see fit to provide. Thank you for your consideration.

Very Truly Yours,

Paul G. Vallas