

Remarks by Chair Carlton W. Reeves

Public Meeting of the United States Sentencing Commission

Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Center

April 17, 2024

Good afternoon! I welcome you all to this public meeting of the United States Sentencing Commission. I am the Chair of the Commission, Carlton W. Reeves. I thank each of you for joining us, whether you are in this room with us or attending via livestream. I have the honor of opening this meeting with my fellow Commissioners. To my left, we have Vice Chair Claire Murray and Commissioner John Gleeson. To my right, we have Vice Chair Laura Mate and Commissioner Candice Wong. We are also joined by *ex-officio* Commissioner Jonathan Wroblewski. Joining us remotely are Vice Chair Luis Felipe Restrepo and Commissioner Claria Horne Boom. As you are aware, this meeting was rescheduled and while all the

Commissioners have worked tirelessly with us earlier this week, our two friends had to return to other commitments. I thank them for being present with us virtually.

Today's meeting marks the end of our second policymaking cycle at the Commission. Let me be clear: when I say "the Commission," I am talking about all of us at the Commission, not just the Commissioners. We are an agency of over 100 people, some of whom are in this room, many of whom are not. No matter where they are working right now, each member of our team played an essential role in crafting the policies we are about to vote on. Whatever we do today, our staff should be proud, knowing that our work is truly their work.

The policies we are voting on today are informed by a tremendous amount of input from individuals, stakeholders, communities across the country, and all those concerned with our criminal justice system. We held deeply informative workshops and public hearings that were supplemented by

extensive written testimony. We also received thousands of public comments. Much of this input is available to watch or read on our website, [www.USSC.gov](http://www.USSC.gov). Ladies and gentlemen, I encourage you to go to our website. There is a treasure trove of information there. Given the effort, time, and thoughtfulness that so many placed into their comments, I am compelled to repeat what I have said so many times: When you speak to the Commission, you will be heard.

Today, we will be voting on a range of amendments to the sentencing guidelines. There is no need for me to comment on them, as this set of policies speaks for itself. But in the proposals we adopted, the proposals we modified, and the proposals we are studying further, there is a common message. To those who have spoken to the Commission, you have been heard.

What is most important is for the public to know is where these amendments come from. They are the product of a bipartisan slate of commissioners working together, as hard as

we can, to achieve consensus. The votes we are about to cast reflect a deep commitment – from every single one of us – to listen, to compromise, and to do the right thing. To my fellow Commissioners, let me say this: there are no better people with whom to do this work. I could not be more honored to be serving with you.

Today focuses on amendments to the sentencing guidelines. But those amendments are just a small slice of what the Commission has done this amendment cycle. Chief among that work has been our gathering and publicizing knowledge about alternatives to incarceration. To see the fruits of our labor, just type “U.S. Sentencing Commission problem solving courts” into your search engine of choice. You’ll find a webpage providing an unparalleled collection of information on court sponsored programs relating to diversion, alternatives-to-incarceration, and reentry. That resource is as important as any amendment we will be voting on today. I am so grateful to the

judges, court staff, Commission staff, and Commissioners who worked tirelessly to put it together.

Before we vote, I want to send a very clear and very important message. After today, we will begin third policymaking cycle. There is no better time to speak to the Commission. We need your help in deciding what research needs to be conducted. What guidelines need to be amended. What problems need to be fixed. Whether you are in the halls of Congress or a prison cellblock, we need your wisdom and knowledge about what work the Commission should prioritize over the next year. As we issue our calls for input over the coming months, answer them. And urge those who care about keeping that word “justice” in our criminal justice system to do the same. We need your thoughts. We need your comments. We need to hear from you.

With that, I will turn it over to our staff ...