

AGENDA MATERIAL

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Ysaura Rodriguez

From: Roger Blumenthal <rblumenthal@pantano.church>
Sent: Monday, December 19, 2022 4:48 PM
To: COB_mail
Subject: Support of Dr Holt

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To: Pima County Board of Supervisors
Re: Support for Dr Holt's appt to be a Judge

To whom it may concern,

My name is Roger Blumenthal and I serve in our great city as the Executive Pastor at Pantano Christian Church. Pantano is a congregation of 4,000 people and a paid staff of 65.

I am thrilled to be writing in support of Dr Holt and his appointment as well as his work in our city. He and I connected several years ago at a local conference which began an ongoing dialog and then a partnership with planning the second Fresh Start event. His passion to help others, especially the previously incarcerated and those who had lost rights, struck a chord with me. As a pastor who works with thousands of people, I totally connected with the need for us to join together to bring a solution to this area of injustice. As an employer, I have had several staff members that were either unable to vote, or had a difficult time getting a job because of a past felony or who could not get life insurance because of their past felony and current label. We connected over the same passion and then we were off and running planning the second Fresh Start event.

The concept of a Fresh Start is what we in the faith community hold dear and believe wholeheartedly that each of us can have. However, in our culture, we have fallen into the idea that punishment is the best path forward. Though I believe there are consequences to our decisions, my question has always been, when do our consequences end? Redemption is the idea of helping a person get back to a place of living in the community again after their consequences. Dr Holt's vision that we can help restore people's voting rights and expunge records of some misdemeanors...all according to the law, will inspire people to live, work and participate in our community again is fantastic. Instead of letting people have to learn to survive under the weight of a label, we can help them find legal freedom and give them the path forward that leads to a thriving life.

Close to a decade ago, we noticed a growing need in our staff. We had hired people with felonies and they were unable to qualify for affordable life insurance to protect their families in case of tragedy. We responded by offering a group life insurance policy that automatically covered all of our staff. Not every employer is able to add such a benefit but this is one basic option that families of "felons" cannot afford. Another area impacting us as an employer is having staff members who feel "less than" because their opinion does not matter on voting day creates a separation from the rest of our community. Another benefit that is allowed to be reinstated after a prison sentence is completed...but for some reason is not automatic for those who

qualify. These types of hurdles just magnify the consequence of a choice in life and remind people that they will never really be part of society again which can cause them to be demotivated to try at all.

Dr Holt has shown through his vision and personal sacrifice that people are part of our society and should be able to have a full voice. I applaud the City of Tucson and Pima County for joining in this historic partnership of city, county, nonprofits and the faith community to address a prejudicial problem and need in our community. As we have gathered at the TCC for Fresh Start events with lawyers, judges, the county attorney's office, officers, and then all of the helping nonprofits to address this need we become a better community. A community that shows compassion and care for its citizens and begins to stop the ongoing punishment for crimes of the distant past. It was at Fresh Start this year that my friend, Tom, had his voting rights restored. After 2 decades he was able to vote in November because of the work that Dr Holt started through awareness and connecting all the professionals together to help people like Tom feel part of the community again.

When I heard that Dr Holt was being considered for appointment to serve as a judge on the Justice Court, I was even more proud of our City and County leaders. You have recognized that a man with a vision, an education and passion can make a difference and we can join him in this great work of restorative justice.

I am honored to be able to call Dr Holt a friend and to share his vision for how we make our city and county a better place to live for all of its residents. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts and experiences with you.

Respectfully submitted,

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