October 23, 2019

Governor Greg Abbott
Office of the Governor
Texas Capitol Room 2S.1

Re: Request for Reprieve for Rodney Reed

Governor Abbott,

I write to add my support to Rodney Reed's request for reprieve, which I understand was delivered to your office on October 21, 2019. As you know, Reed's execution date is currently set for November 20, 2019.

I rarely comment on or intervene in criminal cases. I usually decline to second-guess the judicial process, recognizing that the judiciary is a co-equal branch of government and the public has an interest in judicial finality. But this murder occurred in my district and is unique because of the grave doubt and racial bias that continue to taint Reed's conviction. Therefore, I feel compelled to speak out in this instance.

Reed's attorneys have presented credible evidence (1) that the State's theory of the case depended on scientifically invalid testimony that has since been recanted; (2) that an alternative suspect with a confirmed history of sexual assault, dishonesty, and violence committed the murder; and (3) that Reed's defense is true. If a jury truly made up of Reed's peers heard all of this evidence—as opposed to the scientifically invalid evidence they heard before—are we confident they would convict and sentence him to death?

In this day and age when we're seeing more and more demonstrable proof that innocent people have been sent to prison for crimes they didn't commit, often based on what we now know to be junk science like the kind presented in Reed's case, we should be particularly careful before condemning a man to death. Our laws acknowledge this by giving you the authority to grant a reprieve in capital cases alone to ensure the State of Texas can stop and review all of the evidence when necessary to prevent an unjust execution.¹ Further, our laws require the Board of Pardons and Paroles to investigate a person being considered for clemency on request of the Governor.²

¹ See Texas Const. Art. 4 § 11; Texas Code of Criminal Procedure § 48.01(a).
² Texas Government Code § 508.050.
We will not serve justice or increase the public's faith in our legal institutions by taking the irrevocable step of executing Reed when significant and credible evidence pointing to his innocence has not undergone a thorough, unbiased review. Therefore, I respectfully urge you to grant a reprieve and request the Board of Pardons and Paroles to conduct such a review.

Thank you for considering my request. If you have any questions or wish to discuss this case further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Kirk Watson
State Senator, District 14