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August 7, 2023

By Email and Certified Mail

Speaker Cameron Sexton
Tennessee House of Representatives
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.
Suite 600
Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37243
Email: speaker.cameron.sexton@capitol.tn.gov

Mr. Speaker:

We write on behalf of Representative Justin Jones to confirm that, having been duly reelected, Representative Jones has been or will be, prior to the special legislative session scheduled to begin on August 21, fully reinstated to all rights, duties and privileges of his office, including all committee assignments.

The legal basis for Representative Jones' full and unqualified reinstatement is beyond question, as you have already acknowledged in open session. On April 10, 2023, days after House Republicans unconstitutionally punished Representative Jones for exercising his constitutional right to protest by stripping him of his committee assignments and then expelling him from the House altogether, the Nashville Metropolitan Council reappointed Representative Jones to his seat on an interim basis. Mere hours later, when Representative Jones rose on the House floor and sought clarification that the Speaker would be restoring his committee assignments as had been done for Representative Gloria Johnson, you stated on the record that

[a]s far as committees, as has been the standard practice on both sides, if you're appointed, then a committee is not appointed to that individual until they're duly elected; that's why I put Representative Johnson back on committees—because she's not appointed; she's still duly elected.

As you know, in a special election held last Thursday, August 3, 2023, the people of Tennessee's 52nd District spoke with unmistakable clarity, reelecting Representative Jones by an overwhelming majority of just under eighty percent and returning him to the House for the remainder of the legislative term. Representative Jones has thus been duly reelected, and his committee assignments must be restored immediately along with all other rights and benefits enjoyed by every duly elected House member.

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Representative Jones' full and immediate reinstatement is particularly critical given the special legislative session that is scheduled to begin on August 21, just two weeks from today. As you are well aware, Governor Lee has called the General Assembly into this special session specifically to address issues of public safety, including issues related to school and gun safety, in the wake of the mass shooting tragedy at the Covenant School in Nashville last March.

At least two of the committees on which Representative Jones serves, the Government Operations Committee and the Education Administration Committee, are certain to be central to any bills or proposed measures that the House takes up to address these issues. It is critical that the Representative Jones, whose voice and leadership on issues of school safety and gun control have been recognized throughout Tennessee and the nation, participate in his committees in this important debate. Anything less will only exacerbate the injuries this body has already inflicted on Representative Jones and his constituents by further depriving him of the rights and responsibilities to which you have already acknowledged he is entitled by his election. Anything less will disenfranchise and deny the people of the 52nd District of representation by the person that they have now twice elected to speak on their behalf in the People's House.

Accordingly, please respond by no later than the close of business Friday, August 11, 2023 to confirm that Representative Jones has been restored, effective immediately, to his seats on the Government Operations Committee, the Education Administration Committee, and the Agricultural and Natural Resources Committee and Agricultural Subcommittee. Please also confirm that Representative Jones has otherwise been fully reinstated to all rights, benefits, and duties of a full member of the Tennessee House of Representatives, including the official acknowledgement of his full time served in office for purposes of determining seniority within the House and calculating retirement and other benefits.

We look forward to hearing from you this week.

Respectfully,



Eric H. Holder, Jr.
C. William Phillips
R. Gregory Rubio
COVINGTON & BURLING LLP

Counsel for Rep. Justin Jones

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Cc (by Email only): Representative Justin Jones
Doug Himes, House Ethics Counsel, Tennessee General Assembly
Hon. Jonathan Skrmetti, Tennessee Attorney General & Reporter
Democratic Leader Karen D. Camper