UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF FLORIDA
GAINESVILLE DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v. **CASE NO.: 1:22CR32-AW/MAL**

JOSEPH HARDING
_____/

NOTICE OF FILING

Defendant Joseph Harding, through counsel, respectfully submits the following in connection with his Sentencing Hearing on October 19, 2023:

1. Letter from Mr. Harding's current employer, Del Zotto Products; and

2. Letter from Mr. Harding's brother, Samuel Harding.

Dated: October 6, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY on October 6, 2023, I electronically filed the foregoing document with the Clerk of the Court using CM/ECF system, which will serve a notice of electronic filing to all counsel of record.

/s/ Filzah I. Pavalon
Filzah I. Pavalon, Esq.

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August 31, 2023

Hon. Allen C. Winsor
United States District Judge
United States District Court
Northern District of Florida
111 N. Adams Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301-7730

RE: U.S. v. Joseph Harding / Case No.: 1:22-cr-00032-AW-MAL

Dear Judge Winsor,

The purpose of our letter is to provide a reference of character for our employee and friend, Joe Harding. Our company has a history of over 50 years in our business and we are proud of what we have built. Del Zotto is a precast concrete structure manufacture, concrete plant and steel supplier. Joe works in our Ocala location where we have nearly 200 employees, but he reports directly to us. In a word, Joe is an important part of our company and future growth.

Joe is our account manager and point of contact for our company in the divisions of Ready-Mix Plant, Block Plant and Foundation Supplies. He is deeply familiar with the construction industry, and even though the distribution and manufacturing side is new to him, he understands people and quickly grasps their needs. He knows our community and people respect him, and he works very hard.

Joe is someone we have known personally for nearly 5 years dating back to when he was first exploring running for office. Joe quickly became a friend to our family, and we supported him in his endeavors to be our state representative. Our values aligned then, and they still do today. When we knew Joe was having to restart his career after the challenges he has faced this year, we knew that Joe was someone that we wanted on our team as we continue to expand and grow our family owned and operated business.

We have watched Joe as a friend and employee navigate the challenges that he has faced this year. Every person at some point in their life makes mistakes, and unfortunately for him, he has had to face his mistakes in an extremely public and brutal way. He is genuinely remorseful for the mistakes he has made, and he is very focused on the future.

We as an employer have been successful in working with people who have made bad decisions in their past, and as a company we believe in giving people second chances. We feel confident that Joe will continue to be a good member of our team and we are proud to have him on board.

Regards,

Del Zotto Family:

Philip Del Zotto
Mary Del Zotto
Mario Del Zotto
Abigal Del Zotto
Elizabeth Del Zotto
Miella Del Zotto

June 11th, 2023

From: Samuel S. Harding
Relation: Brother to Joe, my best friend
Address: 3027 Brookshire Drive
Plano, TX 75075
Cellphone: 214-425-8359
Email: driventocompete@yahoo.com

Dear Honorable Allen C. Winsor:

Please accept my Character Letter for Joseph (Joe) Harding.

Joe is the second youngest of five brothers and six sisters, I am the fourth born to our family. I consider Joe my best friend, and closest confidant beyond my wife, Donna. Joe lived with me until I moved to Dallas, TX, December of 2010. Joe worked evenings to be able to attend Florida International University, pursuing a Construction Management degree. During those brief years we developed a close bond as brothers and friends, both of us eager to establish ourselves, understand our abilities and be responsible citizens. I learned the importance of being an adult role model out of our parents' home while still being the fun, older brother, and roommate.

My current role at my employer (hired in 1999) is Group Director – National Sales, West Region. I manage a team of professional sales leaders whom have responsibility of $600MM in Annual Revenue at a Publicly Traded, Fortune 400 Company. My first job at my employer while attending college was an inventory analyst, an hourly role. Joe visited my "office" one day and could not believe the setup – a shed (10' X 18'), (with AC) computer and surrounded by equipment inventory. For Joe, this may have been his first realization of a job beyond trades.

While growing up my dad would volunteer myself and siblings - - maybe best said, volun-told us to assist people within our community needing help. Some of these assignments were weekly, most of them involved roofing, painting or lawn care. While Joe at a young age would watch us work, handing tools when able, he could not wait to be old enough to help and be part of the action. My current view of Joe has not changed since those early years, in fact it has evolved. He approached chores, and community assistance (assignments from Dad) with a positive attitude, he continues to do the same bringing vision and experience. In one instance Joe (around 15 years of age) was working with a group to replace the roof on a church. Rain had begun to fall and unfortunately, he lost his footing falling off the roof, hitting a dumpster then the ground. This required a costly trip to the Emergency Room to patch him back together. Joe's reaction and continued focus while recovering was how he slipped – never on adults around whom should have provided proper safety guidance. I often reflect on this instance as Joe

always holds himself accountable first – setting an exemplary example of himself by his own actions. This injury never slowed Joe, he is always first to see the need of others before his own.

Amanda and Joe met at a Gator football game, the connection was instantaneous. Joe adored Amanda, she grew up in Central Pennsylvania with her brother, dad and grandparents. Her mom passed from cancer while Amanda was a young child. Amanda is resilient and driven, when I met Amanda -- whom Joe had been talking about endlessly -- she was finishing her Bachelors of Science Degree at Central Florida. Amanda moved to S. FL. to attend University of Miami, she received her MBA while working full-time at my employer. Amanda admired Joe's desire to have a family, his tenacity to work thru life's hurdles, to build their dreams together. Joe admired Amanda's entrepreneurial spirit, her desire to build their dreams and make them reality. I was able to sit first row in their early years as a couple, watching them mature in their relationship, always responsible, looking out for others, taking on life and knowing it would not be easy. I was honored to be the Best Man at Joe's wedding 11 years ago. While pursuing College and working full-time to be able to fund tuition, living costs, etc.. both Amanda and Joe made time to volunteer and help in their community. Joe volunteering for Big Brothers of S. FL.

While living in Miami, one of my sisters and her family were involved in a serious auto-accident. My mom reached me and based on the news began a five-hour drive to the hospital. I reached out to Joe to make him aware, he had just started his work shift at a restaurant. He could not answer his phone while at work so I went by to make him aware I was heading to Gainesville. He immediately said he would go, responsibly made his manager aware and then recommended we drive his car to get better gas mileage. He was 20. On the long ride we shared the importance of family bond, looking out for each other and making family a priority. I was not telling Joe these things, they are values we both share.

Joe has a grit and drive that is hard to measure and explain. Joe has an intellectual ability to navigate a challenge, I have seen this illustrated many times in jobs he has held and in situations he has been in. One of the more remarkable examples is when he started working in construction at an entry level position. I'm sure it was a years' time but looking back it seemed like six months Joe was promoted several times and was responsible for building high-end retail stores in the design district in Miami. Joe's work ethic, ability to handle conflict resolution, and commitment to achieve deadlines were quickly seen and recognized by ownership. Within a short amount of time, my brother from our small town in Williston was with ownership of the construction company touring a landmark store that he would be responsible to build in Miami. He finished this project amongst others while attending school in the evenings and online as able too. Each of the jobs Joe has held he has moved to greater responsibility. He establishes a reputation of being trustworthy, diligent and a leader.

After selling their first home in Miami, Joe and Amanda along with their first child Vivienne-June moved back to Central Florida area, Joe transitioned his job from building high-end retail stores to hotels. Our family was ecstatic, the to-be favorite uncle would be 15-20 minutes from most of the family. Joe and Amanda purchased a farm that had been foreclosed and uninhabited for nine years. Joe and Amanda had a vision to build equity, and develop the property to produce income. After years of work their home was a destination. They called it, Harding Farms. Many weekends Joe had nieces and nephews employed on the land cutting grass, fixing fences and working in the barns. Although the term I covet, "favorite uncle", you may now better understand why Joe is the favorite. He modeled work ethic, paid well and most importantly shared his time and skills to nieces and nephews who would give up their weekends or week nights to be available. Many of the nieces and nephews will share their eternal gratefulness to Joe and his generosity. One of my favorite memories of this home was with my wife, Joe and Amanda and newborn son Gideon sitting under the oak trees enjoying a glass of wine on a late Sunday afternoon. My wife and I were able to verbalize to Joe and Amanda's how impressed we were with their hard work and vision. I had seen the neglected and severely overgrown property prior, only Joe and Amanda had the fortitude and horsepower to make Harding Farms a reality. They hosted birthday parties, Holidays, any reason to celebrate was at their destination home on Harding Farms.

Joe entered politics from our knowledge the first in our family to hold an elected position. When Joe shared with me why he wanted to run, his purpose was authentic and wholesome. He wanted to impact change to his community. As a native Floridian, he knew he needed to be a voice in Tallahassee that spoke up for his community, advocated with principle and was relentless in pursuing help for those who could not help themselves. He would be against significant odds, yet his horsepower and diligent work ethic would not be matched. Joe had two areas that he was focused in his first term, a means (Safe Haven) to save unwanted babies at fire or police stations and a way for high school credits to be transferred to trade schools. When Joe won his election, he immediately focused on these areas and he impacted change – both bills receiving support and the later made law. Joe was recognized as the first freshman in his class of House Representatives to sponsor a bill. When I reflect on where Joe put his time and energy your Honor you many now realize where Joe's heart is at, helping those whom cannot help themselves and bringing equity to higher education funding to permit a smooth transition from Highschool to Trade School. A couple of months ago, Joe shared an article with me from several news sources where the first baby had been dropped at a Safe Haven box, and how the Fireman that responded had successfully adopted the baby after a decade of he and his wife trying to have a baby.

The vision and purposeful intent of my brother Joe fulfilled a baby being saved and a husband and wife having the fulfillment of their own child.

We have an incorrigible brother-in-law, which at the time was not known the level of corruption he was engaged. He was purposeful to convince Joe (amongst others) to do business with him, to expand his schemes by using people like Joe whom had a recognizable name and reputation. At a time that Joe was challenged to provide for his family while he adjusted to his political role and started a new business. Joe's eagerness to help, as he has shown many times triggered action and Joe was all in. Against Joe's better judgement he started working with this brother-in-law. I personally know how persuasive and convincing he can be., I cannot over emphasize the persuasive ability this person has. Unfortunately, the convincing and persuasiveness chipped away and Joe fell for one our brother-in-law's habitual schemes. But Joe is responsible for his actions.

After years of pushing our parents, this past Thanksgiving (2022) my mom conceded responsibilities and Joe hosted Thanksgiving at his home. This is a significant responsibility considering the amount of people, food, coordination, ego's etc.. to name a few challenges. Joe and Amanda were amazing hosts as they have always been. Joe invited someone they had taken time to develop a relationship with, a recent divorcee with a young child on an important Harding Family and US Holiday. I recognized this person from a recent visit where Joe asked me to help move some furniture into someone's home that was in need. When all the siblings were still living at home, we discussed that one Holiday a year should be set aside for our family. In time, Thanksgiving has become the preference. Although not possible every year for everyone to attend, those that are able to are together. What Joe and his family illustrated to myself and our two guests was very impactful. A cohesive family unit, that loves all, cares for all and will include all can exist. This takes purposeful effort and self-lessness to care and share like Joe and Amanda did this past Thanksgiving. Joe would not have it any other way, he cares purposefully.

My parents raised Joe and the rest of our siblings in a strict upbringing. They also provided us a loving and safe environment to develop for adulthood. I know Joe being the second youngest and male was a challenge. My parents tweaked the rules and rare freedoms as us older ones grew into teens and adulthood. The bookends of the family carrying the brunt of these changes. Even with this challenge, Joe stay principled and true to his character. Joe was told to leave home after my parents understood he worked at a restaurant that served alcohol. I remember Joe calling me to share, I then talked to my mom who told me he had come home, packed his stuff into his car and left. He did not fight against my dad and I will add that was not always the case but in this instance the clarity for Joe was that he was now an

adult and had the ability to take care of himself. In time Joe settled into a rented room, attending school in Ocala, FL.

Please understand Joe is not perfect. Joe understands the serious consequences he faces in your Courtroom. Joe has addressed this issue head on with our family, individually, and with many of his friends and former business partners. Joe and I have sat and shared all the emotions possible over the impact his decision made to his young family of four, his wife and expansive extended family. Joe grieved for some time with Amanda before anyone else was aware. He disappointed Amanda, he lost her trust and he regrets this with incredible remorse. His contrition is authentic, and gut-wrenching. Joe has remained purposeful to daily do what is right and to move forward to provide for his family and heal the grief and disappointment Amanda and our family have felt.

Joe called me and made me aware of these charges, I will never forget our conversation. The humility and embarrassment Joe felt when he told me was very heavy. He was completely honest in laying out the facts and how he got to this point. He shared how difficult it had been to not tell me prior and the amount of grief that it had caused to he and Amanda. How he had disappointed Amanda, how he knew he disappointed me and our family. I came immediately to Florida for support. As we drove to / from the courtroom last year, Joe reached out to family, employees, and political leadership to make them aware. He handled these conversations with integrity and concern for the person on the other side of the phone. There are many things that stand out in my mind from that day, two specifically were responsibility and remorse to everyone he had disappointed. Your Honor, Joe has not spent a day without remorse and concern for those his actions impacted. Although Joe has done his best to keep engaged with everyone in our family, understandably it has been hard too considering the circumstances.

Joe and I talk often, I visit in person as much as I'm able too. When I speak with Joe he always asks how my wife Donna and I are doing. Even with all that he has been dealing with over the last couple of years he wants to know where are we vacationing, is my golf game as bad as it always been, how is my job, etc... He cares about Donna and I, if you were to spend time with him you would quickly find he cares for everyone. From the drive thru attendant near his home, he knows their name or their favorite football team and engages with them. At the big box hardware store, he knows the manager, and has a preferred checkout attendant where he ribs and banters about how bad their high school football team is playing, even when they do well, he has an angle to rib them. These people do not seek out Joe, he makes them feel important, he brightens their day. A few days after Joe's last court appearance we went to breakfast. As soon as we entered the restaurant Joe greeted the cook and a waitress he knows

by name before sitting down. I was very conscious of being out with him, proud to be with my brother but also aware that many were following his court hearings. Here I thought I was helping Joe by getting out and being in public, but Joe had not changed! His care and awareness of others beyond himself was never more obvious at that moment to me. Joe has high emotional intelligence and his ability to perceive others needs while managing his own emotions is one of many leadership traits he illustrates in his life. People are drawn to Joe from his authenticity, selfless actions and gregarious personality.

These traits of being gritty, purposeful, and kindhearted are rare, they are traits Joe has. I have learned from managing leaders, when you find a leader that understands they have a greater purpose outside one's personal ambitions, whom have discipline and grit, they will be successful and make a difference to everyone they engage who recognize their passions. This is Joe.

Your Honor, you are interacting with Joe for a short and monumental amount of time. I assure you he has never dodged his responsibility. Joe has learned from this and is dealing with the dire consequences of his actions. I'm confident he will not re-offend. He has already illustrated full transparency.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address, Your Honor.

6/11/23

Respectfully,

Samuel S. Harding (Brother to Joe, my best friend)