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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Jeffery L. Greco, Esq. (State Bar Number 32 401 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1240 Santa Monica, California 90401 Telephone: (213) 984-2300 Facsimile: (213) 289-2323 Email: jeff@grecoca.com Attorney for Defendant ANTONIO MARIOT WILSON	25351)					
9	UNITED STATES I	DISTRICT COURT					
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12	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, )	CASE NO. CR 20-201-SVW					
13	Plaintiff,	DEFENDANT'S SENTENCING					
14	) vs. )	MEMORANDUM					
15		Hearing Date: January 28, 2021 Time: 11:00 a.m.					
16		Location: Courtroom of the Hon.					
17	Defendant. )	Stephen V. Wilson					
18	) )						
19							
20 21	Defendant Antonio Mariot Wilson ("I	Defendant"), by and through his counsel of					
22	record, Jeffery L. Greco, of Greco Neyland,	P.C., hereby submits his position regarding					
23	sentencing factors to be considered by the C	ourt in determining his proper and just					
24 25	sentence and the Court's use of information contained in the presentence report (Dkt.						
26	No. 21):						
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I.

## HISTORY OF CASE

On June 24, 2020 Antonio Mariot Wilson pled guilty to a single count information admitting to participating in a scheme to commit wire fraud in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1343.

The presentence report calculates a base offense level of 7 pursuant to USSG § 2B1.1(a)(1), and a 12-level enhancement for loss greater than \$250,000 and up to \$550,000 for pursuant to USSG § 2B1.1(b)(1)(G). In this case, the undisputed intended loss was \$347,000, while the actual loss amount was \$272,000, after Mr. Wilson returned \$75,000 to one of the named victims (see *PSR* p. 7, § 20). After acceptance of responsibility and a timely plea, an additional three (3) points were deducted, thus bringing the total adjusted offense level to 16.

Further, the presentence report finds Mr. Wilson has a criminal history category of III with a corresponding guideline sentence of 27-33 months. The U.S. Probation Office in its January 20, 2021 letter of recommendation (Dkt. # 33) indicated they are recommending a sentence of 30 months and restitution in the amount of \$272,000.

The government in its sentencing position paper (Dkt. 28) agrees with Probation regarding the offense level and criminal history category calculations. The government, however, seeks a sentence at the top of the guideline range at 33 months.

The defense does not agree with the sentencing recommendations.

# ARGUMENT

# A. APPLICABLE SENTENCING LAW

Under the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Booker*, 543 U.S. 220 (2005), the applicable statute governing federal sentencing, 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a), requires a sentencing court to consider the sentencing Guidelines but it permits the court to tailor the sentence in light of other statutory concerns as well. See *Booker*, id. At 264. Judges must still consider the sentencing range contained in the Guidelines, but that range is now nothing more than a suggestion that may or may not be persuasive to a judge when weighed against the numerous other considerations listed in 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a). Id. At 300.

More recently than *Booker*, the Supreme Court has opined that "Guidelines are only one of the factors to consider when imposing sentence." *Gall v. United States*, 552 U.S. 38, 128 S. Ct. 586, 602 (2007). These Guidelines, although "formerly mandatory, now serve as one factor among several courts must consider in determining an appropriate sentence." *Kimbrough v. United States*, 552 U.S. 85 (2007). The statute, as modified by *Booker*, contains an overarching provision instructing district courts to "impose a sentence sufficient, but not greater than necessary, to achieve the goals of sentencing." See *Booker* 543 U.S. at 300. Section 3553(a) lists factors that shall be considered before imposing a sentence. The statute mandates the court to impose a sentence sufficient, but not greater than necessary to comply with the purposes set forth in paragraph (2). Section 3553(a)(2) states that the purposes are:

(A) to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law and to provide just punishment for the offense;

(B) to afford adequate deterrence to criminal conduct;

(C) to protect the public from further crimes of the defendant; and

(D) to provide the defendant with needed educational or vocational training, medical care, or other correctional treatment in the most effective manner.

It should be noted, however, in applying this section that 18 U.S.C. § 3582 states that, "imprisonment is not an appropriate means of promoting correction and rehabilitation."

In determining the appropriate sentence, the Court is to consider, among other things, the nature and circumstances of the offense; defendant's history and characteristics; the need for the sentence to reflect the seriousness of the offense, to promote respect for the law and to provide just punishments; the need for the sentence to afford adequate deterrence and to protect the public from further crimes of the defendant; and the need to avoid unnecessary sentencing disparities. See 18 U.S.C. 3555(a). Nearly 15 years after the United States Supreme Court decision in *Booker*, it is now, without a doubt clear, that the Guidelines are guidelines and serve truly as "advisory". In fact, the Guidelines are no longer "the only consideration" at sentencing. *Gall v. United States*, 522 U.S. 38, 49 (2007). Rather, it provides or serves as the "starting point" for sentencing consideration by the Court. *Cunningham v. California*, 549 U.S. 270 (2007). The Court is to impose a sentence based on an individualized assessment based on the facts and need not find extraordinary circumstances to justify a sentence outside the Guidelines. Id. 47.

B. 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) FACTORS

Section § 3553(a) requires district courts to impose a sentence "sufficient but not greater than necessary" to comply with the four (4) purposes of sentencing. These are set forth in § 3553(a)(2): retribution, deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation.

The Defendant requests that this Court impose a more lenient sentence than that recommended by the Guidelines, based on factors enumerated in § 3553(a).

- 1. The nature of the offense;
- 2. The circumstance of the offense and the history and characteristics of the defendant; and

3. The need to protect the public and afford adequate deterrence.

Based on these factors, the Supreme Court's decisions in Gall and Cunningham

Significantly broaden the discretion of the courts to impose a less stringent sentence that those suggested by Guidelines, in the case at bar, where the Defendant has plead guilty and accepted responsibility to the single count charge in the Information, the Court should exercise its broad discretion to impose a sentence below the guidelines. Mr. Wilson respectfully requests that this Court sentence him to twelve months' of home detention, as well as mandating full payment of the requested restitution in the amount of \$272,000.00. The Defense believes that such a sentence will accurately reflect the sentencing goals the Court should consider pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3553, and that such a sentence would be sufficient to punish the defendant for his criminal conduct.

## C. NATURE OF THE OFFENSE

As set forth in the factual basis of the plea agreement, Mr. Wilson admits that his 18 U.S.C. § 1343 violation stems from his involvement with a company he formed, named "2<sup>nd</sup> Life".

2<sup>nd</sup> Life was envisioned initially as a software program that would help people who qualified for government housing and other intended government benefits to be able to apply online through an animated program. This program would be offered to the public for a cost of \$3.99, which, when paid through the website, would give them access to an animated video showcasing for them in great detail how they could apply for the government benefits they qualify for. 1

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Mr. Wilson was one of 4 children born to Yvetta Jean Wilson. Mr. Wilson's biological father was never in the picture, so for a while it was just Mr. Wilson's mom raising the children by herself. When Mr. Wilson was 10 years old, his Mom married a man by the name of Samuel Martin. Mr. Martin was a sexual predator who began sexually molesting all of Mr. Wilson's sisters. He knew about it, but he was just a young child unable to do anything about it. When it was finally brought to light several years later his Mom kicked Sammy out of the house and they were safe once again. However she was back to being a single mother again, and poverty was a lesson they were all too familiar with. Ms. Wilson remarried a man named Richard Ruff when Mr. Wilson was in high school. He did not abuse the kids like Samuel did, but he bore a striking physical resemblance to Samuel and it continually triggered too much trauma in two of his sisters, so one of them ran away from home and the other left home as soon as she graduated from high school and got married just to get out of the house lest she become a victim all over again. Mr. Wilson was determined to never allow someone to be physically hurt like that in front of his eyes ever again, so he joined the US Navy after graduating from high school. He served in the United States' Navy for a period of twelve (12) years before he was honorably discharged. While Mr. Wilson had been successful in the Navy, he found that life outside of the armed services was very different than life in the Navy, and he struggled.

Now married with kids, Mr. Wilson found himself homeless and living in his car
with his wife and 2 kids. It was a very demoralizing period in his life. He had to fight

with other homeless people just to protect his family as he was once unable to do for his sisters. Mr. Wilson vowed to get his family off the streets and into stable housing, safe from the dangers of a life on the streets.

Mr. Wilson knew from his own personal experience just how difficult navigating these governmental programs could be. He wanted to simplify the process so people who needed the benefits could take full advantage of the programs that are offered.

To further advance this company, which was still in an embryonic stage, Mr. Wilson consulted with, and hired attorney Ross Meador of the law firm CKR Law. The purpose of this engagement was for 2<sup>nd</sup> Life to be formed as a Delaware Corporation. Mr. Meador's practice focuses on privately held companies and entrepreneurial ventures. According to his current website, "He has negotiated and drafted hundreds of business agreements, and advises clients on business models, financing issues, strategic relationships, and the protection and licensing of intellectual property."

# (meenlegal.com/about)

Mr. Wilson was advised accordingly, and he began to incorporate and follow the proper protocol, or so he thought, in order to issue shares, and convertible notes, to angel investors.

## <u>Auna Harris – Investor # 1</u>

Ms. Harris was the first person that invested any money with Mr. Wilson in 2<sup>nd</sup> Life. Mr. Wilson had been acquainted with Ms. Harris for many years prior to her ever getting involved with 2<sup>nd</sup> Life. Ms. Harris and Mr. Wilson were members at the same church before he was sentenced to prison in the 2010 case out of the Northern District of California. When he was released from prison Ms. Harris wanted to help Mr. Wilson get back on his feet. Ms. Harris was aware of Mr. Wilson's involvement in ministry and considered the two of them friends. Over a period of time, Ms. Harris gave Mr. Wilson \$72,000.00. Mr. Wilson agreed to make Ms. Harris a partner in any venture he had, and they would split the profits 50/50. Sometime in 2017, Ms. Harris discovered the Jenifer Lewis allegations online. Ms. Harris worked in some capacity in law enforcement at the time, and she became very upset that Mr. Wilson did not tell her about the issues he was having in the media/press with Ms. Lewis. This was the last time Mr. Wilson and Ms. Harris ever spoke.

# <u>Arda Hagopian – 2<sup>nd</sup> Investor</u>

Mr. Wilson was told about ways to crowdsource funds for start-ups, and he was told to look into Bumble Bizz. Bumble first made waves as the first dating app that was geared toward women in mind. The traditional Bumble app allows women to make the first move when looking online for a date. Bumble Bizz, on the other hand, was a completely different "swiping experience". Designed to be a hybrid of Bumble and LinkedIn, it was launched in 2016. Here, women were allowed to decide which, if any, men/women they connected with on a professional networking level. It was here that Ms. Hagopian "swiped right" on Mr. Wilson and connected with him.

Ms. Hagopian initially gave him a check for \$100,000 and then immediately wrote him another check for \$50,000 in the same day, as she wanted to be more heavily involved in 2<sup>nd</sup> Life. Mr. Wilson gave her a convertible note for the \$150,000 in exchange for a 30% equity stake in 2<sup>nd</sup> Life.

#### Jenifer Lewis – Investor # 3

Mr. Wilson met Hollywood actress, Jenifer Lewis, at L.A. Fitness. At the time Mr. Wilson was a training director at the gym. Ms. Lewis and Mr. Wilson became friends as he was training her for a period of time. They got to know each other on a personal level, and she discovered that he was involved in writing ministry books and also that he had a company he was trying to launch in his spare time. Ms. Lewis is the only victim of the four (4) named victims that was not given any investor paperwork. Ms. Lewis wrote a check to Mr. Wilson in the amount of \$50,000 and in the memo line, she indicated it was a "Gift". The true and exact nature of their relationship is not known, as each side tells a different account. What is undisputed is that at some point Ms. Lewis discovered that Mr. Wilson was an ex-convict who had served time in prison. Ms. Lewis contacted Mr. Wilson and told him to never contact her again. She then immediately reported Mr. Wilson to his employer and eventually had him fired from his job at L.A. Fitness. Subsequent to this, Ms. Lewis began doing media interviews and posting about this incident with Mr. Wilson all-over social media. It became very newsworthy as Ms. Lewis was a star on the sitcom, "Blackish". Ms. Lewis ultimately ended up filing a lawsuit against both Mr. Wilson as well as L.A. Fitness.

### Shelley Klipp – Investor # 4

Mr. Wilson subsequently met Shelly Klipp likewise, on Bumble Bizz. When they met, as with Ms. Hagopian, Mr. Wilson informed her of his company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Life. After learning about it and speaking with Mr. Wilson, Ms. Klipp gave him a check for \$75,000. In exchange, she was given a convertible note, albeit though with a lower amount of equity compared to Ms. Hagopian. However, just two days later Ms. Klipp's son performed a Google search on Mr. Wilson and she discovered a myriad of online videos and press clippings related to Mr. Wilson and Jenifer Lewis. As a result of this discovery, Ms. Klipp contacted Mr. Wilson two days after giving him \$75,000 and she demanded her money back. Mr. Wilson complied with her demand and returned every dollar back to her the same day.

In total, Mr. Wilson accepted \$347,000 in funds from the four named victims. He repaid Ms. Klipp the \$75,000 that she gave him, so he still owes \$272,000 in restitution to the three remaining victims.

#### D. OFFENSE CHARACTERISTICS AND

#### CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEFENDANT

There is no disputing that Mr. Wilson has a checkered past. A simple Google search will yield a number of articles or news' clips about something Mr. Wilson was involved in at some point in his adult life. However, Mr. Wilson, while clearly painted

as a "predator" (see Dkt. 28, p. 3), is far from the predator that the government has painted him out to be.

Mr. Wilson had every intention in making 2<sup>nd</sup> Life a real product. In fact as I write this position paper now, 2<sup>nd</sup> Life exists and is live online (https://a2nd.life). This was not a trojan horse used to pilfer money from unsuspecting females. Mr. Wilson used a professional platform to meet other business-minded people. He was not upfront with three of the victims about his criminal history, and he did not disclose what he was doing with those funds he took from them when he used them to pay for his personal living expenses. He knows that was wrong and he will pay for it. However, I think there is a lot to be said for someone who does something like this. Most of the time you see a person who is fueled by greed and a need to live a lavish lifestyle. People like Ken Lay, former CEO of Enron, and Dennis Kozlowski, former CEO of Tyco Corp., just to name a couple more infamous examples. These people gutted the finances of entire companies to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. Why? Because they could and more importantly, because there was no item in the world they could not buy and that lifestyle where everything has a price and you can buy the world also manifested itself as a compulsion to always need and want "more".

On the flip side, there are individuals like Mr. Wilson. He is far from living the jet setting lifestyles of Ken Lay and Dennis Kozlowski. Mr. Wilson's crimes were done for one reason and one reason alone – so that his family could live under a roof and no longer on the streets. Luckily, I have been fortunate in my life that I don't know what living in a car with my wife and kids is like. I honestly have no idea what exactly that would do to a man's psyche. Mr. Wilson tolerated it for two whole years. Finally, he was sitting on a bank account with over \$200,000 in it. He was sleeping in a homeless shelter. It's easy to surmise how someone in such a situation could justify their actions by using some of that money to pay for living expenses for his family who was homeless. It is hard to imagine that many would not have done the same thing if faced with similar circumstances, and nowhere else to turn. There is little doubt this financial stress affected his mental state and wellbeing, which in turn compromised his decision making. None of this is mentioned to excuse his conduct, but rather to highlight that his conduct was not borne out of greed or material wants, but rather to protect his family and his kids, something he was unable to do for his sisters when he was a child.

As Mr. Wilson never sought treatment for the severe mental trauma he was a victim of, there is no telling just how much damage was done to Mr. Wilson mentally that may have been a catalyst for his prior crimes, as well as the instant offense.

Mr. Wilson first became aware that he was under investigation when he received the DOJ Target letter dated, April 17, 2020. He immediately arranged to surrender himself and has been on bond since June 11, 2020. Mr. Wilson has fully cooperated with pre-trial since his release in June. Unfortunately, as a result of Covid-19, Mr. Wilson has not been able to maintain employment, and as a result he does not have money to tender at sentencing toward the restitution that is owed. Nonetheless, Mr.

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Wilson fully accepts responsibility for this crime and will pay the entire sum of \$272,000 when he is able to work again.

As evidenced by the letters accompanying this memorandum, those who know the real Antonio Wilson, love him dearly. That's the person he is. He is the very embodiment of everything that everyone wrote about him. He is a wonderful father to Bailey and Jordan. They adore their father and love him despite his shortcomings. They know him to be a good man at heart and they know he will always be there for them.

Mr. Wilson's wife, Carolyn, describes her marriage to him as nothing short of amazing since they married in 1998. To read these letters you get a sense that maybe, just maybe, Mr. Wilson really does embody everything those who know him best say that is he. It is often hard to reconcile something like that when you hear evidence of someone who appeared to prey on others for financial gain. It causes you to pause and naturally wonder, "am I just another victim of his cons". The answer to that lies in what he holds closest to his heart – his wife and kids. It is incongruent to be the predator the government labels him as and yet be a man of faith that is the rock his family stands upon. I suspect and fervently believe that his desire to keep his family safe and cared for played a major role in this. That, along with his past trauma that went untreated for decades, both as a child as well as the PTSD he suffered from being in the military, were likely contributing factors to what led Mr. Wilson to make these poor decisions in the first place.

# E. NEED TO PROTECT PUBLIC AND

## AFFORD ADEQUATE DETERRENCE

A guideline sentence for Mr. Wilson would be needlessly and overly punitive, and would not appropriately serve the goals of sentencing. It would also be counterproductive, both for Mr. Wilson and for society, as a guideline sentence would make it far more difficult for him to re-adjust to the "real world" upon his release. Instead, home detention, and/or probation would ensure that Mr. Wilson is supervised while permitting him to earn an honest living and to provide for his family while making restitution payments.

Beginning the middle part of the last century, an enthusiasm for harsher punishment and longer periods of incarceration began to pervade the public discourse. The policy choices that resulted have created an unparalleled rate of incarcerationnearly 2.23 million people, or one out of every 100 adults, are currently imprisoned in the United States. This is a distinct departure from the nation's historical experience as well as the modern experience of peer democracies. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, L. Glaze & E. Herberman, Correctional Populations in the United States, 2012, at 3 (2013), http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cpus12.pdf. The United States now holds the highest prison population rate in the world, over 5 to 10 times more than western European democracies. Int'l Ctr. for Prison Studies, R. Walmsley, World Prison Population List 1-3 (10th ed.2013). Though home to only five percent of the world's population, the United States accounts for nearly twenty-five percent of its prisoners. Congressional Research Service, S. Kirchhoff, Economic Impacts of Prison Growth (2010), http:// fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41177.pdf.

As recognized by Judge Davis, along with many other jurists and experts, "[b]y all accounts, these 'tough on crime' policies have been an abject failure. A rapidly accumulating group of multidisciplinary research studies have come to the conclusion that the rate of incarceration in the United States needs to be significantly reduced, and both the executive and legislative branches seem to agree." <u>United States v.</u> <u>Valdovinos</u>, No. 13-4768760 (slip op. July 25, 2014) (Davis, J., dissenting).

This change in course has been partially brought about by the strain these policies have caused taxpayers. On average, each prisoner costs taxpayers more than thirty thousand dollars annually. Studies published by the Brookings Institute have shown that corrections expenses total \$80 billion per year; and this amount soars to \$260 billion once police, judicial, and legal services are included. The Hamilton Project, M. Kearney, et al., Ten Economic Facts about Crime and Incarceration in the United States (2014), http://www.brookings.edu/research/reports/2014/05/10-crime-facts.

While Mr. Wilson has been arrested numerous times, these arrests must be considered in conjunction with the fact that Mr. Wilson had a very terrible childhood. The fact that Mr. Wilson's mother was, sadly, incapable of protecting her children from a sexual predator who abused all of his sisters cannot be overstated. Additionally, Mr.

Wilson's mother essentially abandoned him and his sisters once she remarried and had another child, opting to insulate herself with her new family and get rid of the children that were no longer wanted. Moreover, and as noted above, Mr. Wilson is in very poor health currently. He is currently suffering from type II diabetes, benign prostatic hyperplasia with incomplete bladder emptying, SVT (supraventricular tachycardia) elevated cholesterol, CKD (chronic kidney disease), and acute renal failure. (*See Wilson Medical Records*). With the Covid-19 pandemic still in full swing, any prison sentence for someone with Mr. Wilson's medical condition can potentially become a life sentence if he contracts Covid-19 while incarcerated.

In fact, since his arrest in this case Mr. Wilson has focused on staying out of trouble and focusing on the personal relationships which matter so much to him. Indeed, Mr. Wilson has certainly been deterred enough through this arrest, and all he stands to lose due to his incarceration, including the loss of his own life. In terms of general deterrence, Mr. Wilson's plight serves as a cautionary tale to those who have access to the internet and can see what happened to the "guy who conned Blackish actor, Jenifer Lewis," thereby deterring them from going down the wayward path Mr. Wilson wandered.

#### F. CONCLUSION

On behalf of Mr. Wilson, counsel respectfully asks this Honorable Court to sentence him to twelve (12) months of home detention where he can work and provide DEFENDANT'S SENTENCING MEMORANDUM

for his wife and children. Although this sentence is below the guidelines, imposing a sentence below the guidelines is appropriate in this case because of the Defendant's acceptance of guilt as reflected in his plea agreement, taking full responsibility for his past actions, remorse for his conduct and agreement to pay the full restitution amount of \$272,000. A sentence such as this will accurately reflect the sentencing goals the Court should consider pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3553(a) and that such a sentence would be appropriate and sufficient to punish the defendant for his conduct, but not greater than necessary to protect the public interests in incapacitation, retribution and deterrence.

Alternatively, should the Court deem it appropriate to impose incarceration instead, Mr. Wilson would respectfully ask that the Court impose a sentence of a year and a day, and recommend that he be designated to a Southern California Facility.

Dated: January 21, 2021

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/ Jeffery Greco

Jeffery L. Greco Greco Neyland, P.C. Attorneys for Defendant Antonio Wilson

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