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United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

September 22, 2023

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20546

Dear President Biden:

Our nation's freedoms have been hard won by brave Americans who stood up on behalf of our nation's fundamental values. At great personal sacrifice, these men and women pushed our country to live up to our highest ideals of fairness and equality. History teaches us that too many of these heroes pass before their contributions to society can be appreciated and celebrated. Today, we are lucky to have the opportunity to celebrate a living hero of the civil rights movement, who has given decades of service to the people of Ohio and to our country, and has given hope to people all over the world. I ask that you recognize Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr. with an honor worthy of his decades of dedicated service, the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Rev. Dr. Moss's life and work are inextricably linked to the civil rights movement – a movement which sought to spark the conscience of a nation and ensure that all Americans had access to the rights and privileges provided under our Constitution. His life's work has given voice to hope and dreams of all Americans seeking freedom and opportunity. Born in Georgia, Rev. Dr. Moss received his bachelor's degree and his Master's of Divinity from one of our nation's great Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Morehouse College. In Georgia, he led his first congregation as a pastor in LaGrange. After completing his studies, Rev. Dr. Moss moved to Lockland, Ohio, and served as pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church for 15 years, while also acting as co-pastor with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr., at Atlanta's Ebenezer Baptist Church. He eventually moved to Cleveland and made his home at Olivet Institutional Baptist Church, where he served until his retirement. Seemingly incapable of serving just one flock, Rev. Dr. Moss also worked with the historic Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, where his son Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III now serves as senior pastor. Rev. Dr. Otis Moss exemplifies the best of Ohio and of our country.

Rev. Dr. Moss lived out his faith by standing up for the civil rights of Black Americans, and he has continued to be a leader for all God's people in the six decades since he started his ministry. His passion and advocacy led him to be a staff member for the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., serving as Director of the Cincinnati-area Southern Christian Leadership Council in the 1960s as an affiliate of Dr. King. He participated in the historic Civil Rights march in Selma, Alabama, joining Dr. King in the effort to secure voting rights. His efforts to fight for justice have taken him around the world, preaching the message of peace from Taiwan and Hong Kong, to Japan, Israel, and South Africa. He has been a national leader and an advisor to presidents – Rev. Dr. Moss advised President Jimmy Carter and was a guest of President Clinton's at the signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan – while remaining deeply embedded in the Cleveland community he served for decades.

Dr. King taught us that "progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability." There is no doubt that Rev. Dr. Otis Moss Jr. has pushed the wheels of progress forward, and brought us closer to the just and equal society we're all striving to create. While there is much work still to be done, it is trailblazers like Rev. Dr. Moss who have spurred our country to live up to our founding ideals. I can think of no more fitting tribute to Rev. Dr. Moss's life of service than the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Sincerely,



U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown