

April 2, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR REVIEWING AUTHORITIES

FROM: [REDACTED]

SUBJECT: Character Statement in support of Michael Hannigan

Thank you for allowing me to submit this Character Statement in support of Cadet First Class Michael Hannigan of the United States Air Force Academy. My name is [REDACTED], and my son, [REDACTED], is in his first year at the Academy and is a Freshman on the swim team.

Currently, I am a senior partner in [REDACTED] law firm of [REDACTED], where I have practiced law for 35 years. Prior to that time, it was my honor to serve as the judicial law clerk for Judge [REDACTED] of the United States District Court for [REDACTED], who served as Chief Judge of that court and presided over the [REDACTED].

In my 35 of practice in Washington, I have provided legal representation to individuals and corporations and handled numerous pro bono matters on behalf of those who don't often have a voice – the indigent, battered and abused women, and immigrants fleeing persecution in their home country. During my career, I have had the opportunity to represent a wide variety of notable clients, including the current President of the United States. However, I take the greatest satisfaction in the more important role I have had the opportunity to serve as mentor to dozens of outstanding young people, including graduates of the Air Force Academy who are distinguishing themselves in various fields of endeavor, including the law.

In the course of that experience, I have learned that even the most gifted and honorable young people often make serious mistakes in judgment. That does not indicate, by any means, that they are individuals lacking a moral compass, are vindictive toward others, or are disrespectful of the institutions they serve. Indeed, it is most often the case that those who falter and respond by acknowledging their errors and learning from them, turn out to be the best of our future leaders. Michael Hannigan is one such young man.

My window into those qualities of leadership flows from my son's involvement both with the Academy and the swim team. More particularly, my experience with Michael derives from three points of focus: the respect and appreciation for his character and leadership that [REDACTED] spoke of consistently and repeatedly throughout his first year at the Academy; my own interactions with him through the team that demonstrated to me

his devotion the Academy, his fellow cadets and his country; and finally through my family's interaction with his family, who like Michael, are people of faith who stand as a worthy testament to self-sacrifice, hard work, and love of country.

Michael takes pride in his country, his commitment to military service and the Academy which has been such an important part of his life. Loyalty and self-sacrifice are characteristics that are deeply imbedded in his personality, particularly with respect to his fellow cadets. As captain of the swim team, Michael was the example of hard work and excellence in all things. He was always there to encourage and motivate his teammates, whether it related to their progress in the pool, struggles in the classroom, or the daily hardships of cadets on the Terrazzo. He was particularly supportive of the Freshmen swimmers and their achievements, and never seemed compelled to dwell upon his own.

Indeed, his measure of success was not his own accomplishments, but those of his team mates and fellow cadets. ██████ looked up to Michael because of his leadership and his decency. Michael was a person who protected the younger swimmers, not someone who persecuted them. As ██████ more than once recounted, whatever challenges he faced on the team or as a cadet, he felt that Michael "had his back." For those who know Michael, it simply is not in his nature to act with malice or personal animus toward others.

I am generally aware of the circumstances under which this letter in support of Michael is being offered. I am also aware that in the wake of misjudgment, the actions of an individual can speak volumes about his character, integrity and leadership. While I am not privy to the particulars of the incidents or investigation that gave rise to his current situation, I do know that throughout the course of the investigation, his message to ██████ and the rest of the team was an honorable one worthy of any leader - to be truthful, cooperative and respectful of the process, irrespective of how that might affect Michael.

Along those same lines, at the Conference swimming championships in Houston, with a third consecutive championship in view, Michael as captain of the team was sent home to the Academy in humiliation during the course of the meet. Remarkably, at a time which must have been incredibly stressful and personally devastating, his response was one which personified service before self. The words and actions he directed to his teammates in his own hour of despair were not about himself, but only about them – encouraging them to continue on in the performance of their duty and to represent the Academy and the team in the best traditions of the service. Perhaps just as telling was the fact that his act of leadership cascaded through the other senior swimmers who echoed the same refrain of duty and commitment to the Freshman swimmers.

Let me close by saying that, it is likely that someday in the future during combat, with lives hanging in the balance, Michael may face even greater challenges at a time when it will be critical to rise to the moment. At such a time and place, I would have no reservations about my son serving under him. Nor, I can assure you, would ██████. Whatever the situation, we can fully expect that Michael's response will be the same;

that is, to carry out the mission regardless of his own personal circumstances and to look after the members of his command in a manner that will do honor to his country, the Air Force and the Academy.

Sincerely,

A large black rectangular redaction box covers the signature and name of the sender. The box is composed of several overlapping rectangular shapes, creating a stepped effect on the right side. A small, faint comma is visible at the top right corner of the redacted area.