I used a gun to rob four banks and commit a carjacking in the Lansing area when I was in my early 20s, crimes that were prosecuted in federal court because they involved federally insured financial institutions. I was convicted by a jury and sentenced to 10 years in prison — with its consequential financial, social, and emotional costs, ruined lives and broken families. I no doubt deserved punishment. But I should not have to die behind bars for my crimes.

Death in prison, though, is my fate unless the U.S. Congress passes the FAIR Act of 2017. Introduced to the U.S. Senate in Octo-
ber 2017 by U.S. Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), and a bipartisan group of 90 reform-minded lawmakers, the FAIR Act seeks to reduce the penalties for thousands of men and women, like me, who were sentenced to life in prison under one of the harshest and most widely disparaged federal prison statutes — Section 9441(c) of Title 18 of the U.S. Code.

Under that section, the use of a gun during a crime of violence or drug trafficking offense is separately punishable by a minimum of five years and a maximum of life in prison for each crime, plus 25 years for any “second or subsequent” violation. It seeks to address systemic racial injustice, to shift our course to one that is, after — the punishment of a lifetime — more focused on rehabilitation, all of which were changed simultaneously — are so extreme because they reduce the risk of reoffending.

For me, it was the sentencing equivalent of a two-time death penalty. I was sentenced to life for the firearm used in my first robbery, 25 years for my first carjacking, 15 years for my second carjacking, four and four-thirds and 20 more for the firearms offenses plus 25 years for the gun use. I will spend the rest of my life back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-to-back-and-on — on the top of the 10-year prison term I received for the back-to-back-to-back-to-back and on offense — and I have no chance at early release because Congress 10 years ago pineled parole back in 1997. Like all mandatory minimum penalties, this law didn’t give judges the option of sentencing dangerous, egregious offenders, they alone can effectively deter-

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My conviction and sentence, under the provisions of Section 9441(c), is the second such sentence that I said was “without question, the most painful experience of my life.”

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