

PAROLE DECISIONS FOR LIFERS

FOR THE YEAR 2025

Prepared By The Lifer's Group Inc.

MCI-Norfolk

P.O. Box 43

Norfolk, MA 02056

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PAROLE DECISIONS FOR LIFERS

2025

The Lifer's Group Inc. welcomes all comments, criticisms, and suggestions regarding this report or any other Lifer's Group Inc. report. This, our nineteenth report on the parole decisions for lifers, has been authored by Gordon Haas who is responsible for its contents, including the tables and analyses of the data. All calculations were made by the author based on the data compiled from the 2025 Records of Decision posted online by the Parole Board and provided to the Lifer's Group Inc.

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To comment on this report or any other publication by the Lifer's Group Inc., please write to:

Chairman
Lifer's Group Inc.
MCI-Norfolk
P.O. Box 43
Norfolk, MA 02056

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INTRODUCTION

This is the nineteenth report on parole decisions for lifers published by the Lifer's Group Inc. The Records of Decision analyzed in the report are for prisoners serving life sentences with the eligibility for a parole hearing after having served fifteen years. The Records of Decision were provided by the Massachusetts Parole Board for those decisions posted online for 2025. One hundred forty one Records of Decision are analyzed in this report. All calculations and tables presented in this report are the work of the author based on data extrapolated from the 141 Records of Decision for 2025, except for the percentages for Risk Assessments and Racial Breakdowns which were provided by the Parole Board and adopted in this report.

A parole hearing for a lifer is either an Initial Hearing, for those who are appearing before the Parole Board for the first time, or a Review Hearing for those who had been denied at a previous Initial Hearing or a Review Hearing. Review Hearings are divided into two subsets - one for those lifers who have never been approved for a parole; the other for lifers who had been approved previously for a parole, were released but were violated and returned to prison.

Life sentences with psrole reviews are predominatly for prisoners who have been convicted or pled guilty to the taking of a life. Records of Decision, however, are also included for juveniles who had previously been convicted of firts degree murder, for which there is no parole. Their sentences were reduced to second degree murder with an option for a parole due to the Diatchenko decision the Supreme Judicial Court in 2013. (1)

The Diatchenko decision applied to those convicted of first

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degree murder committed when they were under the age of 18. In 2025 the Supreme Judicial Court in the Mattis decision (2) extended the prohibition of sentenced to life without parole to those who committed their crimes between the age of 18 to 21.

Finally, also included in this report are those serving second degree life sentences for crime not involving the taking of a life, e.g., rape, armed robbery or as an habitual offender.

Massachusetts General Law, c. 127, sec. 130 stipulates that no prisoner is to be paroled solely due to good conduct while incarcerated. Rather, a parole is to be granted only when the Parole Board members are convinced that there is a reasonable probability that if paroled, the lifer would not violate the law and that the release would not be incompatible with the welfare of society. In addition to those standards, the Parole Board members are to determine whether the four goals of sentencing have been met, i.e., punishment, public safety, deterrence, and rehabilitation, in that order.

In 2025, of the 141 Records of Decision, 96 or 68% were unanimous decisions, a decrease from 74% in 2024. The remaining 45 Records of Decision broke down as follows: three 5-1 decisions, six 5-2 decisions, ten 4-3 decisions, eleven 4-2 decisions, eleven 6-1 decisions, one 4-1 decision, and three 3-3 decisions. Since three decisions were tie votes (3-3), the lifers were denied paroles as a majority of the Parole Board members must vote in favor of granting a parole. Each of those three lifers in 2025 who had tied votes were given one year Setbacks as per the Parole Board's regulations. That is that each lifer would see the Parole Board again after one year since last hearing date.

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RESULTS

1) Approval / Denial Rates

Of the 141 Records of Decision for 2025, 77 or 54.6% were approvals; 64 or 45.4% were denials. The Approval Rate in 2025 was significantly lower than in 2024 when 73.6% of lifers were paroled that year.

Table 1 presents the data for Approval/Denial Rates for 2021 through 2025.

Table 1

Year	# of Hearings	Approvals		Denials	
		#	%	#	%
2025	141	77	54.6	64	45.4
2024	121	89	73.6	32	26.4
2023	138	76	55.1	62	44.9
2022	171	84	49.1	87	50.9
2021	<u>164</u>	<u>92</u>	56.1	<u>72</u>	43.9
Totals	735	418	56.9	317	43.1

The annual Approval Rates from 2003, the first year the Lifer's Group Inc. analyzed parole rates for lifers, through 2025 are:

2025 - 54.6%	2017 - 24.1%	2009 - 38.9%
2024 - 73.6%	2016 - 15.0%	2008 - 31.9%
2023 - 55.1%	2015 - 29.1%	2007 - 28.5%
2022 - 49.1%	2014 - 26.0%	2006 - 33.3%
2021 - 56.1%	2013 - 15.3%	2005 - 33.3%
2020 - 43.7%	2012-2011 - 18.4% (3)	2004 - 46.6%
2019 - 38.9%	2010 - 34.1%	2003 - 37.8%
2018 - 29.1%		

2) Initial Hearings

In 2025, 70 lifers appeared before the Parole Board for the first time. Forty-one (58.6%) were approved for paroles. This Approval Rate was the highest for Initial Hearings since the Lifer's

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Group Inc. began reporting on paroles for lifers. The Approval Rate for Initial Hearings in 2025 was skewed, however, by the Mattis lifers. Forty-three had Initial Hearings and thirty were approved. Eliminating the Mattis lifers, the Approval Rate for Initial Hearings]was 40.7%, still significantly higher than Approval Rates for Initial Hearings prior to 2024. Table 2 below presents the overall Approval Rates for Initial Hearings from 2021 through 2025.

Table 2

Year	# of Hearings	# of Approvals	% of Approvals	# of Denials	% of Denials
2025	70	41	58.6	29	41.4
2024	36	21	58.3	15	41.7
2023	32	7	21.9	25	78.1
2022	48	12	25.0	36	75.0
2021	<u>35</u>	<u>7</u>	20.0	<u>28</u>	80.0
Totals	221	88	39.8	133	60.2

3) Review Hearings

The Approval Rate for all Review Hearings held in 2025 was 50.7% (36 of 71), a decrease from 80.0% in 2024. Of the 71 Review Hearings in 2025, 67 were for lifers who never had been paroled. The Approval Rate for this subset was 50.7% (34 of 67), a decrease from 78.9% in 2024. The remaining four had Review Hearings after having a previous parole revoked. Of that subset, two were approved, an Approval Rate of 50.0%, a decrease from 88.9% in 2024.

Table 3 on page 4 presents the Approval and Denial Rates for all Review Hearings from 2021 through 2025.

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Table 3

Year	# of Hearings	# of Approvals	% of Approvals	# of Denials	% of Denials
2025	71	36	50.7	35	49.3
2024	85	68	80.0	17	20.0
2023	106	69	65.1	37	34.9
2022	123	72	58.5	51	41.5
2021	<u>129</u>	<u>85</u>	65.9	<u>44</u>	34.1
Totals	514	330	64.2	184	35.8

Table 4 below presents the Approval Rates data for both subsets of Review Hearings for 2021 through 2025.

Table 4

Year	# of Non-Revoked Hearings	# of Non-Revoked Approv.	% of Non-Revoked Approv.	# of Revoked Hearings	# of Revoked Approv.	% of Revoked Approv.
2025	67	34	50.7	4	2	50.0
2024	76	60	78.9	9	8	88.9
2023	87	52	59.8	19	16	84.2
2022	108	64	59.3	15	8	53.3
2021	<u>107</u>	<u>65</u>	60.7	<u>22</u>	<u>20</u>	90.9
Totals	445	275	61.8	69	54	78.2

4) Approval Rates For The Types Of Hearings

Table 5 below presents the comparative Approval Rates for each type of parole hearing from 2021 through 2025.

Table 5

Year	Initial	Review - No Revocation	Review After a Revocation
2025	34.6%	50.7%	50.0%
2024	58.3%	78.9%	88.8%
2023	21.9%	59.8%	84.3%
2022	25.0%	59.3%	53.3%
2021	20.0%	60.7%	90.9%

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5) Approval Factors

In 2025, four factors dominated the Approval decisions. Respective frequency percentages for each factor for 2025 are listed in Table 6 below as well as the data for 2021 through 2025. Overall, the Lifer's Group Inc. has reported on fourteen Approval factors. In 2025, only two other factors were cited in more than 10% of the Approvals: Steady Employment While Incarcerated - 18% and A Strong Parole Plan - 13%. No other factor was cited more than twice.

The numbers in parentheses after the years are the number of approved lifers for that year. Listed after each factor are the percentages the factor was noted by the Parole Board in the Approved Records of Decision.

Table 6

Factor	2025 (77)	2024 (89)	2023 (76)	2022 (84)	2021 (92)
Active Prog. Participation	88%	86%	76%	96%	96%
Addressed Areas of Need	61%	71%	92%	79%	76%
Strong Comm. Support	56%	46%	53%	38%	32%
Minimal Disc. History	52%	39%	26%	26%	16%

Parole Board members continue to emphasize that lifers engage in programs which address the areas of the lifer's needs and then what each lifer has learned from his/her participation as opposed to the sheer number of programs a lifer has participated in. See Section 7 for listings of programs cited in Records of Decision by the Parole Board in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025.

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Some lifers engage in personal self-improvement plans or religious conversions. Neither the Parole Board members nor the Lifer's Group Inc. discounts the value of such work. But, Parole Board members often do not view such programs as adequate substitutions for meaningful participation in programs provided by the DOC, whether a lifer feels that he/she needs the programs or not. This is not to say that lifers should not participate in correspondence courses, especially if the DOC does not offer a comparable program. In fact, in some Records of Decision, the Parole Board has praised a lifer for seeking out such programs when the DOC was not providing programs which met that lifer's needs. But, if the DOC does offer a program which the Parole Board has recognized as meeting lifers' needs such as Restorative Justice, then the lifers should participate meaningfully if he/she desires to put together the best parole package possible.

Accepting responsibility, expressing remorse and compassion for victims and their family members, and having a solid parole plan are minimum thresholds lifers need to pass over for the Parole Board members to give serious consideration whether or not a parole should be granted. The absence of one or more of those factors regardless of lifer's other accomplishments, is enough to cause the Parole Board to deny a parole.

6) Denial Factors

In 2025, nineteen separate factors were cited in various Records of Decision denying paroles. Of those nineteen, only seven were cited in at least 20% of the sixty-four denials. Not one of the

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other twelve factors for denying paroles was noted in more than five Records of Decision. Consequently, only the previously noted seven factors were deemed significant enough to be included in this report. Table 7 below presents the comparative percentage data for the frequencies of those seven Denial Factors for 2021 through 2025. The total number of Denials for each year is noted in parentheses next to the years.

Table 7

Factor	2025(64)	2024(32)	2023(62)	2022(87)	2021(72)
Lack of Insight	44%	25%	32%	17%	50%
Unaddressed Issues	38%	19%	47%	52%	57%
Needs Longer Period of Adjust.	28%	39%	20%	33%	38%
Serious Disc. History	27%	15%	37%	33%	43%
Unresolved Sex Issues	25%	18%	18%	11%	26%
Limited Program Part.	23%	18%	19%	24%	13%
Mental Health Issues	22%	18%	19%	32%	30%

Lifers need to be honest about their program participation. Lying about programs one has completed or is participating in is a prescription for disaster. Parole Board members have each lifer's full history before them, including institutional programming, disciplinary history, whether or not a lifer has served in the armed forces and where, or graduated from college. Claiming to have attended

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faithfully a program such as 12-Steps invites the question: Which step is your favorite or was most meaningful for you? Being unable to name a favorite step or the most important one casts doubt on the lifer's truthfulness. Similarly, claiming to be a veteran in the armed forces or having served in combat when either or both assertions are untrue is the pathway to a denial. These are not hypothetical events. They have occurred more than once and resulted in denials of parole with long Setbacks.

To reiterate, Parole Board members want to know how a lifer would use the knowledge and skills he/she has professed to have learned or gained to deal with any problems which may arise should the lifer be paroled and returned to society. If, for instance, a lifer states that he/she has learned various coping skills from programs such as Alternatives to Violence or Anger Management, including what his or her triggers are, and then reacts with hostility to one or more questions asked by a Parole Board member, the lifer has simply demonstrated that he/she has not learned the necessary skills well enough. The result - a Denial coupled with a Setback to give the lifer more time to actually master the skills needed to function in society as a productive citizen. It is the welfare of society which Parole Board members are more concerned about than simply handing out second chances.

7) Programs Noted By The Parole Board In 2025

Table 8 on page 10 lists the number of times a particular program was cited in Records of Decision in at least four Approvals for 2025, 2024, 2023 and 2022. The numbers in parentheses indicate the

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number of Approvals for each year. It is important to note that in the vast majority of Records of Decision for Approvals (72%), no specific program was listed. In the 28% of Records of Decision for Approvals where specific programs were made, multiple programs were cited.

Table 8

Program	2025 App. (77)	2024 App. (87)	2023 App. (76)	2022 App. (84)
Restorative Jus.	21	28	25	17
College	15	4	7	13
Alter. To Viol.	7	8	6	9
Viol. Reduction	6	8	14	5
Jericho Circle	6	5	9	4
CRA	5	9	11	14

What can be garnered from this distribution is that there are not one or two programs which will ensure a parole. For the past four years, Restorative Justice is cited significantly more times than any other program. Yet, Restorative Justice was still cited in less than one-third of all Records of Decision for Approvals. Still, the best strategy is to participate in those programs which meet a lifer's individual needs.

Every lifer should consider meeting with one's case worker and/or the institutional parole officer early in one's incarceration to devise a program plan and then to follow it. Even if a lifer has many years in, such a meeting can still be productive. Finally, the Lifer's Group Inc. is not suggesting that a lifer not participate in programs he/she finds interesting or enlightening, just try to concentrate on successfully completing programs which address a lifer's individual needs.

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In 2025, Parole Board members have cited in Mattis cases that a lifer had engaged in rehabilitative programs before the lifer had any chance for a parole. This was viewed very positively by Parole Board members. (See Excerpts section.) Thus, it would behoove every lifer not eligible for parole now to engage in rehabilitative programming because one can never know what changes may lie ahead.

8) Setbacks

The Parole Board assesses Setbacks from one to five years when a lifer has been denied a parole. The Setback represents the number years a denied lifer will have to serve before his/her next parole hearing.

Table 9 below presents the comparative data for the various lengths of Setbacks given by the Parole Board from 2021 through 2025. The numbers in parentheses denote the total number of denials for each year.

Table 9

Length	2025(64)	2024(32)	2023(62)	2022(87)	2021(72)
1 Year	7 10%	5 16%	9 15%	10 11%	2 2%
2 Years	28 48%	12 37%	26 42%	36 41%	22 31%
3 Years	17 27%	8 25%	19 31%	29 34%	22 31%
4 Years	8 12%	6 19%	4 6%	10 12%	19 20%
5 Years	4 6%	1 3%	4 6%	2 2%	7 10%

The total number of Denials from 2021 through 2025 was 317. Of those: 33 (10%) received One Year Setbacks, 124 (39%) received Two Year Setbacks, 95 (30%) received Three Year Setbacks, 47 (15%) received Four Years Setbacks, and 18 (6%) received Five Year Setbacks.

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In Table 10 below, the Setback numbers and percentages for the sixty-four Denials in 2025 are broken down by type of hearing: Initial, Review with no prior parole, and Review* after a parole had been revoked. The number in parentheses are the numbers of Denied Records of Decision for each type of hearing.

Table 10

Hearing	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years
Initial (30)	0 - 0%	15 - 50%	10 - 33%	3 - 10%	2 - 7%
Review (33)	6 - 18%	13 - 39%	7 - 21%	5 - 15%	2 - 7%
Review* (1)	1 - 100%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%

The average length of Setbacks in 2025 was 2.59 years, the same as in 2024.

9) Approved Lifer Destinations

Of the 77 lifers approved for paroles in 2025, 12 were released to approved home plans, 7 to Interstate transfers and 6 to ICE. Twenty-five were approved to CRJ (Community Resources for Justice) with nineteen required to serve from three months to one year in minimum security. Twenty-one were approved to go to a Long Term Residential Program (LTRP) of which fourteen were required to serve from three months to one year in medium security. One lifer was paroled to a VA facility. Another was paroled to a medical facility and one was paroled to a federal retainer and three were paroled to Sober Houses.

Table 11 on page 13 presents the data for the destinations of approved lifers from 2021 through 2025. The number in parentheses after each year indicates the total number of approvals.

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Table 11

Destination	2025(77)	2024(89)	2023(76)	2022(84)	2021(92)
LTRP	21 - 27%	42 - 47%	32 - 42%	41 - 49%	37 - 39%
CRJ	25 - 32%	19 - 21%	10 - 13%	10 - 12%	0 - 0%
Home	12 - 16%	11 - 12%	9 - 12%	11 - 13%	17 - 18%
Interstate	7 - 9%	8 - 9%	7 - 9%	6 - 7%	9 - 10%
ICE	6 - 8%	5 - 6%	3 - 4%	7 - 9%	12 - 13%
Feds	1 - 1%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	0 - 0%	2 - 2%
Res. Fac.	5 - 7%	4 - 5%	15 - 20%	8 - 10%	15 - 16%

10) Risk Assessments

The Parole Board is required to administer a Risk Assessment Tool for every lifer who has a parole hearing. Risk Assessment Tools are intended to introduce a data based factor into the decision making process in order to place less reliance on unexplained discretionary factors. The Parole Board has not provided the data for 2025 to complete this section. If the data is received after this report is published, the data will be included in the report for lifers in 2026.

11) Lifers Serving Life For Non-Homicides

Of the 141 Records of Decision for lifers for 2025, 19 or 13% were for those serving second degree life for crimes which did not include the taking of a life, such as armed robbery, rape, or as an habitual offender. Table 12 on page 14 presents the number for each category of crime and the number approved for a parole for the years 2021 through 2025.

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Table 12

Crime	2025 #/App.	2024 #/App.	2023 #/App.	2022 #/App.	2021 #/App.
Rape	15/1	12/6	8/4	12/3	10/3
Armed Rob.	3/3	4/3	5/4	5/3	4/1
Unarm. Rob.	0/0	0/0	2/1	0/0	2/2
Burglary	1/0	0/0	4/2	0/0	1/0
Totals	19/4	16/9	19/11	17/6	17/6
% App.	21%	56%	58%	35%	35%

Note the significant decrease in the parole rates for this subset of lifers, 21% in 2025 as compared to 56% in 2024 and 58% in 2023. Note also the number of parole hearings for lifers who had been convicted of rape, nine of whom has been convicted of rapes of children. The parole rate for those convicted of rape of adults and children was 6% (1 of 15) as compared to 50% in 2023 and 2024.

12) Times Between Hearing Dates and the Dates of Decision

Each Record of Decision notes both the date of the public hearing and the date of decision. The Date of Decision is not the date the Parole Board members rendered their decision. Rather, the Date of Decision is the date the Record of Decision was signed by the Chairperson or designee, thereby validating the actual decision.

In 2025, the average number of calendar days between Hearing Dates and Dates of Decision for all the Records of Decision analyzed in this report was 140 days, 57 days, nearly two months, longer

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than in 2024 when the average time between Hearing Dates and Dates of Decision was 97 days. In 2025, the average time between dates increased by 59%.

Table 13 below presents the data for the average lengths of time between Hearing Dates and Dates of Decision in 2025 as well as the data for the years 2024, 2023, 2022, and 2021.

Table 13

# of Days	2025 #/%	2024 #/%	2023 #/%	2022 #/%	2021 #/%
1 - 100	9/ 7%	71/59%	101/73%	20/12%	10/ 6%
101-200	130/92%	49/40%	37/27%	77/45%	79/48%
201-300	2/ 1%	1/ 1%	0/ 0%	54/31%	42/26%
301+	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	0/ 0%	20/12%	33/20%
# of Dec.	141	121	138	171	164
Ave. Delay	140	97	86	189	215

Note the significant decrease in the number of lengths of time 100 days and under - from 59% in 2024 to 73% in 2023 to 7% in 2025. Note also the concomitant increase in lengths of time for 101 days to 200 days. In 2025, the number of lengths of time for that set was 130 days or 92%, while in 2024, the number was 49 days or 40% and in 2023, the number was even fewer days at 37 or 27%, even though there was a similar number of Records of Decision for each of those years.

In April 2025, Chairperson Tina Hurley submitted her resignation.

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Board Member Tonomey Coleman was named Acting Chairperson until Angelo Gomez, in July, was appointed Chairperson. Thus, in 2025, the average time between Hearing Dates and Dates of Decision can be calculated for each of the three Chairpersons. For Tina Hurley, the time difference was 120 days; for Tonomey Coleman, the time difference was 123 days; and for Angelo Gomez, the time difference was 153 days, a full month longer than his predecessor. It should also be noted that in December 2025 not one Record of Decision was published by the Parole Board. The Lifer's Group Inc. knows of no other year, save the COVID years, when there was a month with no published lifer parole decisions.

13) Juveniles At The Times of Their Crimes

Those under the age of 18 at the time of the commission of their crimes and who were serving life-without-parole sentences became eligible for a parole hearing after the Supreme Judicial Court's Diatchenko decision in 2015.

In 2025, six juveniles formerly serving life-without-parole (LWOP) sentences appeared before the Parole Board. Five were approved for paroles - an Approval Rate of 83%. Since 2015, 106 parole Records of Decision for juveniles have been reviewed by the Lifer's Group Inc. Of those 106 hearings for juveniles formerly serving LWOP, 53 have been approved for paroles, an Approval Rate of 50%.

In 2025, two juveniles who were serving second degree life sentences appeared before the Parole Board and were approved for a parole; one other juvenile serving second degree was denied. In 2025, a total of nine lifers who had committed crimes before the age of

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18 had parole hearings. Six had Initial Hearings - four (67%) were approved for paroles. Three had Review Hearings and all three were approved for paroles.

14) Attorney Representation

Of the 141 Records of Decision analyzed by the Lifer's Group Inc. for 2025, 118 of those lifers were represented by attorneys, or 84%. Attorney representation was either by a private attorney - either paid for by a lifer or assigned by the Committee For Public Services (CPCS) - or by a student attorney from Northeastern, Harvard, or Boston College. Of the 118 lifers who had been represented by counsel, 66 were approved - an Approval rate of 79%, a decrease from 82% in 2024. Of the 23 lifers who chose not to be represented by counsel at their parole hearings, eleven or 48% were approved for paroles, a slight increase from 43% in 2024.

Student attorneys represented lifers at 29 hearings in 2025 - 11 from harvard, 5 from Northeastern, and 13 from Boston College. Of those 29 lifers represented by attorneys in 2025, 18 or 62% were approved for paroles, a decrease from 74% in 2024. The Approval Rate for lifers represented by non-student attorneys was 54% - 48 of 89.

Forty-nine practicing attorneys represented lifers at parole hearings in 2025. Of those 49 attorneys, 44 represented one or two lifers each. The remaining five attorneys represented three or more lifers. The number each of those five attorneys represented and the number of approvals are listed in Table 14 on page 18.

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Table 14

Attorney	# Represented	# of Approvals
Lisa Newman-Polk	5	5
Amy Belger	5	5
Mathew Koes	4	0
Ryan Schiff	3	3
Michael Nam-Krane	3	0

It is important to note that judging an attorney solely by the number or percentage of Approvals is not a fair nor productive way to choose an attorney. One must remember that Diatchenko and Mattis lifers are entitled to an attorney to represent them. Thus, an attorney may not have the opportunity to choose whom they will represent. Whether or not a lifer is granted a parole depends far more on the individual lifer's record and advances made to address the areas the lifer needs to address. No attorney can overcome a lifer's lack of progress in his or her rehabilitation. It is the lifer who asking for a parole, not the lawyer.

Table 15 below contains the data for approvals and denials for the 141 Records of Decision analyzed in this report for 2025 broken down by whether an attorney represented a lifer or no attorney was present at the hearing and the combined data for 2015 through 2025, a total of 1,347 Records of Decision.

Table 15

	# 2025 Approvals	# 2025 Denials	#2015-2025 Approvals	#2015-2025 Denials	Overall App %
Attorney	66	52	475	451	51%
No Attorney	<u>11</u>	<u>121</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>272</u>	35%
Totals	77	64	624	723	46%

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Whether or not to engage representation at a parole hearing can be a difficult decision depending upon an individual lifer's needs. Those who are preparing for an Initial Hearing should give careful consideration to obtaining representation. One must remember the importance of first impressions, i.e., how a lifer presents him/herself at the Initial Hearing and the contents of the lifer's parole package. No attorney, regardless of his or her skill level, can be expected to convince the Parole Board that a lifer should be paroled if that lifer has not put in the work necessary to present him or her in the best light possible. There is an old adage which is appropos to a lifer not doing the work he or she needs to do to be best prepared for a parole hearing. The adage is: "One cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

The Lifer's Group Inc. does recommend that any lifer who is preparing for an Initial Hearing give careful consideration to engaging representation. What transpires at an Initial Hearing sets a foundation which will carry on through any subsequent Review Hearings should a lifer be denied at the Initial Hearing. Thus, having representation at an Initial Hearing can be most advantageous to assist the lifer to "get off on the right foot."

15) Analysis Of Parole Decisions By Race

At the time this report was completed, the Parole Board had not responded to our Public Records request for the relevant data. If the Parole Board does provide the data subsequent to the publication of this report, the data will be included in our 2026 Report on Paroles For Lifers.

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16) Female Lifers

In 2025, of the 141 Records of Decision analyzed in this report, five female lifers went before the Parole Board. One had an Initial Hearing and four had Review Hearings. The lifer who had the Initial Hearing was approved. All four who had Review Hearings were denied. Two of the denials received one year Setbacks. Of the remaining two, one received a three year Setback and the other a four year Setback.

From 2018 through 2025, twenty-eight female lifers went before the Parole Board - ten for Initial Hearings and eighteen for Review Hearings. A total of nine were approved for paroles in that eight year period - an Approval Rate of 32%. An Approval Rate of only 32% over the eight year period is discouraging, especially when compared to the 57% Approval Rate for male lifers over the same time period. - 515 Approvals of 899 male lifer hearings.

For two of the Denials in 2025, their Review Hearings were the sixth before the Parole Board. Of the remaining two, one had a tie vote (3 - 3) at her second hearing before the Parole Board. For the last female lifer, this was her fifth time before the Parole Board.

17) Victims' Genders

In 2022, at the request of one of our then members, the Lifer's Group Inc. began to track whether or not the gender of the victim might have influenced Parole Board decisions, i.e., was the Approval Rate for lifers whose victims were female significantly lower than the Approval Rate for lifers whose victims were male. In the 141

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Records of Decision for 2025 where the victim's gender was noted, 89 of those Records of Decision had victims who were male. The resultant Approval Rate was 65% (58 of 69). The number of Records of Decision in which the victim was identified as a female totaled 48, of which 15 were paroled at an Approval Rate of 31%. Table 16 below presents the data from 2022 through 2025.

Table 16

	Male Vic. App.	Male Vic. Den.	% App.	Female Vic. App.	Female Vic. Den.	% App.
2022	67	47	54.8	19	38	33.3
2023	49	33	59.8	20	20	50.0
2024	66	9	88.0	23	19	55.0
2025	<u>66</u>	<u>31</u>	84.1	<u>15</u>	<u>33</u>	31.2
Totals	230	120	52.2	77	110	41.2

2025 is the fourth year the Lifer's Group Inc. has tracked this data set. Overall, there is an eleven percent differential over the four years in comparable Approval Rates for lifers whose victims were either male or female. 2025 had a particularly high disparity with and 84% Approval Rate for lifers whose victims were male versus 31% for lifers whose victims were female. The Lifer's Group Inc. seeks data from at least one more year before concluding whether there is an overall significant difference in Approval Rates based on the gender of the victims.

18(Mattis Lifers

As noted earlier, in 2024 the SJC eliminated LWOP sentences for emerging adults, i.e., those who had committed their crimes when they

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were between the ages of 18 and 21. Thus, those lifers in that cohort became eligible for a parole hearing. Over two hundred lifers were affected. Only those, however, who had served at least fifteen years were immediately eligible for a parole hearing.

In 2025, the Parole Board held Initial Hearings for forty-three Mattis lifers. Thirty were approved for paroles, an Approval Rate of 70%. The average number of years of incarceration for forty-three lifers thirty-five. The longest was fifty years (a Denial); the shortest was twenty-six years, also a Denial. Of the forty-three Mattis lifers who went before the Parole Board, twenty-six had served from twenty-nine to thirty-four years.

In total for 2024 and 2025, the Lifer's Group Inc. has reviewed fifty-one Mattis lifers who went before the Parole Board. Of those fifty-one, thirty-eight were approved, an Approval Rate of 74.5%. Under Angelo Gomez's Chairmanship in 2025, thirteen Mattis lifer decisions were published. Seven of the thirteen were approved- an Approval Rate of 54%.

The Parole Board members in several Records of Decision that they were impressed that the lifers had participated in self-improvement programs while still serving LWOP and had no realistic opportunity for a release.

DISCUSSION

The lengths of Records of Decision remained at two or three pages. The deemphasizing of the specifics of the crimes continued in 2025. This continues to be a positive development. In past years, the

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description of the crime took up nearly half of the Records of Decision which could often go on for four or five pages. But, the sections on parole history and the actual hearing have also been reduced. Unfortunately, for our reports, the Records of Decision lack important data like the reasons lifers were returned from paroles.

The description of the parole hearing itself was condensed and many of the explanations for why a parole was not granted still lack specificity. All of these revisions limit the data the Lifer's Group Inc. can glean from the Records of Decision. But, that is a small price to pay for the much improved procedures for writing and publishing the Records of Decision.

As noted in our 2024 Report On Paroles For Lifers, the lengths of the Records of Decision in 2025 continued to be two or three pages and the prehashing of the facts of the crimes remained short and to the point. The Parole Board in 2025 did not often note which programs the members found effective or which were indicators that a lifer was ready to rejoin society. Restorative Justice was noted most often (see page 10), but only for 27% of Approvals.

The Parole Board did undergo major changes in its organization. Tina Hurley departed in April 2025. Tonomy Coleman served as temporary chairperson until Angelo Gomez, Jr. took over in October, 2025. One result was the lengthening of the times between Hearing Dates and Dates of Decision from 97 days in 2024 to 140 days in 2025 - a 44% increase. Another result, as noted on page 16 of this report, due to the changes in leadership was that the Parole Board did not publish

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any Records of Decision in December of 2025, the first time, except during COVID, since the Lifer's Group INC. has been reporting on paroles for lifers that a Parole Board failed to publish any decisions in any one month.

The Approval Rate for the months of 2025 when Tina Hurley was the chairperson was 66%. Under Tonomey Coleman, the Approval Rate was 50%. And, under Angelo Gomez, jr., however, the Approval Rate dropped to 47%.

A significant change introduced by Chairperson Gomez has been to require either the lifer or his/her attorney to give the Opening Statement. As noted by Attorney Patricia Garin, supervisor for the Northeastern University School of Law Prisoners' Rights Clinic, "under Gomez, the board has limited the decades old policy [of lifers and attorneys sharing the opening statement which] will slant the focus of the hearing away from the rights of the petitioner." Attorney Garin adds: "An opening statement is an extremely important part of a parole hearing...This new procedure makes it impossible for parole petitioners to apologize directly to victims at a public hearing and also exercise their right to have their attorney make an opening where complex issues can be explained to the board." (3) This is certainly not a good start for Angelo Gomez's tenure as Chairperson of the Parole Board.

END NOTES

1. Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk District, 471 Mass. 12 (2015)
2. Com. v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024)
3. Jean Trounstin, "Parole in Massachusetts: Ignored, Misunderstood, And Misrepresented," binj.news, January 22, 2026.

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ADDENDUM

After the body of this report had been finished, the Parole Board answered our Public Records Request for the data on Risk Assessments and Racial Breakdown for Approvals and Denials for 2025. Note: the difference in the number for Risk Assessments and Racial Identities (147) and the number of Records of Decision analyzed in this report (141) may be attributed to the Parole Board's not posting six Records of Decision in 2025.

10) Risk Assessment

The levels of Risk Assessment included in this report are: Low, Medium, High, Very High. The table below contains the Risk Assessment data as reported by the Parole Board for 2025.

Risk Level	#App.	#Den.	Total	%App.	%Den.
Low	23	8	31	74%	26%
Medium	53	32	85	62%	38%
High	9	18	27	33%	67%
Very High	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>0%</u>	100%
Totals:	85	62	147	58%	42%

In comparison to 2024, the Approval Rate for all categories decreased significantly: Low Risk lifers in 2024 were paroled at 82%; in 2025, the Approval Rate was 74%. Medium Risk lifers in 2024 were paroled at 73%; in 2025, at 62%. High Risk lifers were paroled in 2024 at 60%; in 2025, at 35%.

The Table on the Top of page 25 presents the total Risk Assessment data provided by the Parole Board for the years 2017 through 2025.

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Risk Level	# App.	# Den.	Total	% App.	% Den.
Low	114	67	181	63%	37%
Medium	355	309	664	53%	47%
High	88	193	281	31%	69%
Very High	2	23	25	8%	92%
None	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	20%	80%
Totals	560	596	1156	48%	52%

Note that the Approval Rate for Low Risk lifers from 2017 through 2025 is 10 points higher than for Medium Risk lifers. Should not Low Risk lifers be paroled at a significantly higher rate than Medium Risk lifers? The Lifer's Group Inc. continues to advocate that Low Risk lifers should be presumptively paroled based on their Risk Assessment rating unless the Parole Board articulates in writing specific reasons why a lifer should not be paroled. Denying 37% of Low Risk lifers over the last nine years brings into question either the validity of the Risk Assessment tool or the manner in which the Parole Board members utilize it.

15) Analysis Of Parole Decisions By Race

A lifer's racial identity is not indicated on the Record of Decision, the Parole Board supplies the relevant data which are presented in the table below for 2025. Note, as with the Risk Assessments, the number of lifers is six more than presented elsewhere in this report.

Race	Approvals	Denials	Total	% Approved
Caucasian	28	32	60	47%
African-Amer.	32	19	51	63%
Latino	20	10	30	67%
Asian	4	0	4	100%

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Race (cont.)	Approvals	Denials	Total	% Approvals
Native Amer.	0	0	0	0%
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	57%
Totals	85	62	147	58%

The table below presents the combined data for the racial breakdowns of decisions for lifers from 2020 through 2025.

Race	Approvals	Denials	Total	% Approvals
Caucasian	187	184	371	50%
African- Amer.	180	121	301	60%
Latino	104	68	172	60%
Asian	15	4	19	79%
Native Amer.	5	2	7	72%
Unknown	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	33%
Totals	492	381	873	56%

The data in this table are instructive. Over the past six years, the Approval Rates are consistent for Caucasians, African-Americans, Latinos. The original query was whether or not the Parole Board favored Caucasians over African-Americans or over Latinos or over both. From 2020 through 2025, the Lifer's Group Inc. finds no significant differences in parole rates based upon race.

EXCERPTS FROM 2025 RECORDS OF DECISION:

1. While the Board recognizes his progress in self-development, he has yet to address the causative factors directly related to this offense. _____'s version of the offense contradicts known facts. The Board encourages _____ to engage in Domestic Violence Programming and enhance his insight into Victim Impact.

This lifer was denied at an Initial Hearing with a Two Year Setback

Parole Decisions For Lifers - 2025

2) The Board notes _____'s insight into his substance use issues and mental health...He demonstrated insight and empathy at the hearing. He has a comprehensive re-entry plan which will meet his needs. He has strong family support.

This lifer was approved at a Review Hearing

3) _____ presents with a significant support system, many who testified to his transformation, insight, and how they could support his re-entry. The Board also considered testimony from a formerly incarcerated individual who benefitted from his mentorship, as well as a support letter attesting to the same.

This lifer was approved at a Review Hearing

4) _____'s participation in programming most of which occurred prior to his being made parole eligible pursuant to Mattis is remarkable.

This lifer was approved at an Initial Hearing

5) The Board notes that _____ still appears to lack insight into his actions. The Board also found the circumstances of the murder, and _____'s actions in the following years, to be particularly concerning. His versions of the crime have varied over the years, causing the Board to have concerns regarding his rehabilitation. The Board encourages _____ to reflect on his accountability and address his mental needs.

This lifer was denied at a Review Hearing and given a four year Set-back

6) The Board notes it has concerns regarding _____'s statements at the hearing, noting that he does not believe programming would be beneficial for him and self-improvement is not a need area. The forensic evaluation noted areas where _____ struggles with decision-making. The Board encourages _____ to utilize programs to assist with enhancing his skills to address areas in need as identified in the evaluation.

This lifer was denied at an Initial Hearing and given a two year Set-back

7) The Board is concerned with _____ due to his filing of a fraudulent affidavit in a 2020 motion for a new trial in which he asserted his actual innocence of the murder.

The lifer was denied at an Initial Hearing and given a two year Set-back

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8) Although _____ has participated in significant programming while incarcerated, his ongoing use of violence reflects his current inability to resolve matters in a pro-social way. _____'s testimony at the hearing reflected a lack of empathy and remorse. The Board encourages _____ to continue to invest his time with programming that addresses his issues with violence and to remain disciplinary report free.

This lifer was denied at a Review Hearing and given a three year Setback

9) _____'s history of violence and self-harm, and his history of medication non-compliance, concerns the Board as to whether he will be able to live and remain at liberty without violating the law and such that his release will be compatible with the welfare of society. A comprehensive re-entry plan and evaluation will allow the Board to further address any concerns at the next hearing.

This lifer was denied at a Review Hearing and given a two year Setback.

10) The Board continues to have concerns about _____ given his history of sexual violence and his manipulative behavior. He continues to provide testimony which is contrary to objective facts. He displays the same patterns of behavior and does not reflect rehabilitative progress since his last hearing.

This lifer was denied at a Review Hearing and given three year Setback.

11) _____ maintains his innocence and requested that the Board not ask any questions relating to his underlying crime. _____'s empathy and insight is significantly hampered by his refusal to answer questions surrounding the circumstances which led to _____'s conviction. _____ asked the Board to review written materials, but refused to answer any questions related to those materials. _____ is encouraged to come before the Board again when he can more fully discuss the circumstances which led to his incarceration, so that the Board can fully explore how _____'s release is compatible with the welfare of society.

This lifer was denied at a Review Hearing and given a two year Setback.

12) _____ has taken accountability and demonstrated his level of compassion. He provided insight into the effect of his actions on the victims' family and community. He demonstrated remorse for his actions. _____ worked as a companion, further demonstrating his level of compassion. _____ expressed a desire to give back to his community for the harmed he caused.

This lifer was approved at an Initial Hearing.

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13) _____ began working toward self-development prior to the Mattis decision. He has completed numerous programs to address need areas. _____ has been engaged in individual therapy since 2018. _____ has acquired occupational skills that are transferable in the community.

This lifer was approved at an Initial Hearing.

14) _____ has a history of employment and has acquired skills that will assist him with employment in the community. _____ has invested in addressing need areas that were directly related to the offense. He also appears to have benefited from his investment in Restorative Justice. _____ has a well thought-out release plan and support system to assist him with adjustment.

This lifer was approved at a Review Hearing.

15) 15) Since _____'s last appearance before the Board, he has addressed the Board's concerns raised at that time and completed numerous programs.

This lifer was approved at a Review Hearing.