



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

CAROLYN RILEY

F80939

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: March 30, 2023

DATE OF DECISION: June 6, 2023

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Tina Hurley, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Dr. Maryanne Galvin, James Kelcourse, Colette Santa

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On February 9, 2010, in Plymouth Superior Court, Carolyn Riley pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in the death of her four-year-old daughter, Rebecca Riley. She was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole.

Ms. Riley appeared before the Parole Board for an initial hearing on March 30, 2023. She was represented by student attorneys from Harvard University Law School. The entire video recording of Ms. Riley's March 30, 2023, hearing is fully incorporated by reference to the Board's decision.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: After careful consideration of all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of offense, criminal record, institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing or in written submissions to the Board, we conclude by unanimous vote that the inmate is not a suitable candidate for parole.

The Board is of the opinion that Carolyn Riley has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitative progress that would make her release compatible with the welfare of society. On December 13, 2006, Ms. Riley and her husband, Michael Riley, murdered their four-year-old daughter Rebecca Riley. The medical examiner determined cause of death as intoxication due to the combined effects of clonidine, Depakote, dextromethorphan (cough syrup), and chlorpheniramine (cold medicine). The amount of clonidine alone was high enough to cause death as a result of heart failure and pulmonary edema. Ms. Riley maintains that Rebecca had a "cough" and Ms. Riley simply did not take Rebecca to the doctor in a

timely manner. She stated she followed all doctor recommendations for Rebecca's care. The Board notes medical records indicate Rebecca suffered from a prolonged period of abuse. Ms. Riley's account of Rebecca's death is at odds with both physical evidence and numerous witness statements. To suggest that the child's death was anything but fatal maltreatment defies logic. Although Ms. Riley has engaged in numerous programs, she does not appear to have benefited from them as she demonstrates zero insight into her culpability. She needs to do serious work in the areas of victim empathy and understanding the choices she made as a parent. To the extent that she is able, she should pursue any available counseling to address anger, violence, and other need areas.

The applicable standard used by the Board to assess a candidate for parole is: "Parole Board Members shall only grant a parole permit if they are of the opinion that there is a reasonable probability that, if such offender is released, the offender will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." 120 C.M.R. 300.04. In forming this opinion, the Board has taken into consideration Ms. Riley's institutional behavior, as well as her participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of her incarceration. The Board has also considered a risk and needs assessment and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize Ms. Riley's risk of recidivism. After applying this standard to the circumstances of Ms. Riley's case, the Board is of the unanimous opinion that Carolyn Riley is not yet rehabilitated and, therefore, does not merit parole at this time.

Ms. Riley's next appearance before the Board will take place in five¹ years from the date of this hearing. During the interim, the Board encourages Ms. Riley to continue working toward her full rehabilitation.

I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above referenced hearing.



Tina M. Hurley, Chair

6/6/23
Date

¹ One Board member voted to deny parole with a review in four years.