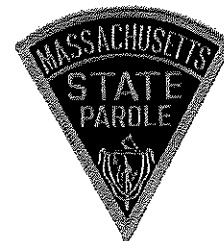


*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*

**PAROLE BOARD**

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*Executive Director*

**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**HECTOR ARRIAGA**  
**W55093**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** April 17, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** September 23, 2025

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz<sup>1</sup>

**VOTE:** Parole is granted to a Long-Term Residential Program or CRJ after 120 days in lower security from date of decision.<sup>2</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On September 21, 1993, following a jury trial in Hampden Superior Court, Hector Arriaga was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Arnaldo Esteras. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Mr. Arriaga became parole eligible following Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024), where the Court held that sentencing individuals who were between ages 18 through 20 (emerging adults) at the time of the offense to life in prison without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional. As a result of the SJC's decision, Mr. Arriaga's mittimus was corrected to reflect that his sentence for first-degree murder carried the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On April 17, 2025, Mr. Arriaga appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Claudia Leis Bolgen. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Arriaga's April 17, 2025, hearing.

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Ortiz was not present for the hearing, but he reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote. Former Chair Hurley participated in the hearing on this matter but departed the Board prior to the decision.

<sup>2</sup> One Board Member voted to parole directly to a LTRP.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On September 13, 1992, 20-year-old Hector Arriaga murdered Arnaldo Esteras in Springfield in retaliation for (what was perceived as) Mr. Esteras' insult to Mr. Arriaga's STG.<sup>3</sup> On the early afternoon of September 13th, Mr. Esteras purportedly told STG member Ismael Cintron to take off beads that were associated with his STG. Mr. Cintron reported this to STG leadership, who ordered that Mr. Esteras be murdered. Mr. Cintron was provided a gun, Mr. Arriaga was provided a folding knife, and both men were dispatched to conduct the murder. That evening, the men approached Mr. Esteras on Main Street in Springfield. Mr. Cintron decided he could not shoot him, so Mr. Arriaga took the gun and shot Mr. Esteras three times from approximately four feet away. Mr. Esteras died shortly thereafter.

Mr. Arriaga and Mr. Cintron then fled by car to Connecticut, where they discarded their clothing and the firearm used to kill Mr. Esteras. Mr. Arriaga and his accomplices were later arrested after a police investigation resulted in the recovery of the firearm and clothing. During an interview with police, Mr. Arriaga admitted to officers that he was at the scene of the murder with Mr. Cintron and had helped to dispose the clothing and firearm. He told investigators that the pair had been attempting to rob Mr. Esteras.<sup>4</sup>

**APPLICABLE STANDARD:** Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and remain at liberty without violating the law and that release is not incompatible with the welfare of society." M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. In making this determination, the Board takes into consideration an inmate's institutional behavior, their participation in available work, educational, and treatment programs during the period of incarceration, and whether risk reduction programs could effectively minimize the inmate's risk of recidivism. M.G.L. c. 127, § 130. The Board also considers all relevant facts, including the nature of the underlying offense, the age of the inmate at the time of the offense, the criminal record, the institutional record, the inmate's testimony at the hearing, and the views of the public as expressed at the hearing and/or in written submissions to the Board.

Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). Individuals who were emerging adults at the time of the offense must be afforded a "meaningful opportunity to obtain release based on demonstrated maturity and rehabilitation" and the Board evaluates "the circumstances surrounding the commission of the crime, including the age of the offender, together with all relevant information pertaining to the offender's character and actions during the intervening years since conviction." Id. (citing Diatchenko v. District Attorney for the Suffolk Dist., 466 Mass. 655, 674 (2013) (Diatchenko I); Miller v. Alabama, 567 U.S. 460, 471 (2012); Graham v. Florida, 560 U.S. 48, 75 (2010)). Since brain development in emerging adulthood is ongoing, the Board also considers the following factors when evaluating parole candidates who committed the underlying offenses as an emerging adult: 1) a lack of impulse control in emotionally arousing situations; 2) an increased likelihood to engage in risk taking behaviors in pursuit of reward; 3) increased susceptibility to peer influence which makes emerging adults more likely to engage in risky

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<sup>3</sup> This statement of the case is derived from Commonwealth v. Arriaga, 438 Mass. 556 (2003).

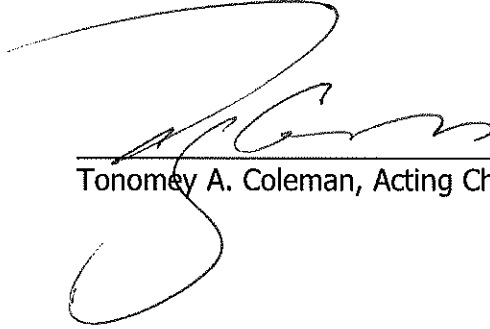
<sup>4</sup> Mr. Cintron pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in this case. Numerous other individuals connected to the murder were convicted of various charges related to this murder.

behavior; and 4) an emerging adult's greater capacity for change. See Mattis, 493 Mass. at 225-229.

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** Mr. Arriaga is 52-years-old and has been incarcerated for approximately 32 years. The Board considered the Mattis factors in relation to the crime and Mr. Arriaga. The Board notes Mr. Arriaga's commitment to rehabilitative efforts prior to the Mattis decision. He renounced his STG affiliations in 2010. Mr. Arriaga has been sober during his incarceration. He has served as a program facilitator. He has been involved in Restorative Justice programs. He scores as low risk per Dr. Brown's evaluation and risk assessment. Mr. Arriaga learned to write in English during his incarceration. He has been employed as a janitor since 2019. Mr. Arriaga presented as empathetic and insightful during his hearing. The Board heard testimony in support of parole from Mr. Arriaga's two friends and brother. The Board heard testimony in opposition to parole from Hampden County Assistant District Attorney Jennifer Fitzgerald.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for 2 weeks or program; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Supervise for drugs with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence with testing in accordance with Agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim(s)' family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment and relapse prevention; Long Term Residential Treatment; Mandatory - may have contact with [named individual].

*I certify that this is the decision and reasons of the Massachusetts Parole Board regarding the above-referenced hearing. Pursuant to G.L. c. 127, § 130, I further certify that all voting Board Members have reviewed the applicant's entire criminal record. This signature does not indicate authorship of the decision.*



Tonomey A. Coleman, Acting Chair

Date

9/23/25