

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

JOHN ALMON
W37892

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: April 15, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: September 17, 2025

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Tonomey Coleman, Sarah B. Coughlin, James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz¹

VOTE: Parole is granted to a Long-Term Residential Program or CRJ after 90 days in lower security.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On October 21, 1980, following a jury trial in Essex Superior Court, John Almon was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Paul Legere. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. Mr. Almon 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. Almon's mittimus was corrected to reflect that his sentence for first-degree murder carried the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On April 15, 2025, Mr. Almon appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Christine Sunnerberg. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Almon's hearing on April 15, 2025.

¹ 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.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: John Almon stabbed Paul Legere twice during a confrontation on March 18, 1980, in Salem. Mr. Legere died from his injuries one week after the stabbing. According to an eyewitness, Mr. Almon and Mr. Legere were discussing pills outside of the Multi-Save Market. Mr. Legere asked Mr. Almon to return his pills, which led to a verbal argument. When Mr. Almon and Mr. Legere entered an alley, a witness saw Mr. Almon hit Mr. Legere. Mr. Almon said to Mr. Legere that "he couldn't take no more" and stabbed him in the throat. According to the witness, Mr. Legere retreated to a corner, but he returned. Mr. Almon then stabbed him in the abdomen. Mr. Legere was not observed with any weapons, nor striking Mr. Almon.

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.

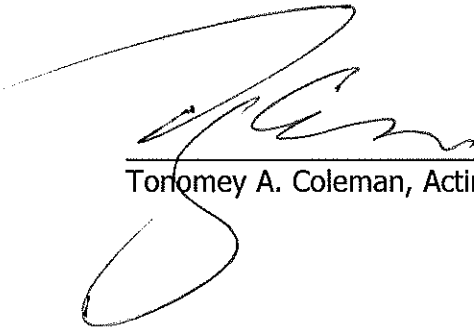
Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). 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 behavior; and 4) an emerging adult's greater capacity for change. See Mattis, 493 Mass. at 225-229.

DECISION OF THE BOARD: The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Almon has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society. While considering the Mattis factors, the Board notes Mr. Almon's rehabilitative progress. Mr. Almon had significant institutional adjustment issues, but now has had no disciplinary reports in over 20 years. He more recently engaged in programming and explained how Restorative Justice has been helpful to him. He showed insight into his substance use issues, and his need to continue with AA and supports, so as not to relapse. The Board notes his over 40 years of sobriety. He has maintained employment and had trusted positions. He has strong family support. Mr. Almon demonstrated insight and empathy. The Board considered Dr. Rojas' testimony. The Board

considered the opposition statement provided by Essex County Assistant District Attorney Michael Sheehan. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Mr. Almon has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Waive work for 2 weeks or retirement; 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; Must complete LTRP; Must attend CRJ for at least 90 days; AA/NA at least 3 times per week; Mandatory - sponsor.

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

9/17/25