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Angelo Gomez, Jr.  
Chair

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**RECORD OF DECISION**  
**In the matter of**

**Lonnie Watkins**  
**W58450**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** August 14, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** January 14, 2026

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz

**VOTE:** Parole is granted to an approved home plan after 90 days total in lower security.<sup>1</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On June 28, 1994,<sup>2</sup> following a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court, Lonnie Watkins was convicted of two counts of murder in the first-degree for the death of Kevin Christopher and Lloyd Industrious. He was sentenced to two counts of life in prison without the possibility of parole. He was also sentenced to two concurrent 15 to 20 year sentences for armed robbery. Mr. Watkins became parole eligible following the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216 (2024), where the court held that sentencing individuals who were ages eighteen through twenty at the time of the offense (emerging adults) to life without the possibility of parole is unconstitutional. As a result of the SJC's decision, with regard to Mr. Watkins's first-degree murder conviction, he was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On August 14, 2025, Mr. Watkins appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Meryl Kukura. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Watkins' August 14, 2025, hearing.

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<sup>1</sup> Board Member Coleman was present at the hearing but departed the Board prior to the decision.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Watkins' life sentence was to be served after a county sentence for a prior offense. He began serving this sentence on April 20, 1995.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On March 28, 1993, at approximately 4:00 a.m., 23-year-old Kevin Christopher and 21-year-old Lloyd Industrious left a party they had been attending in Mattapan. The two men headed back to their vehicle which was parked nearby. As they approached the vehicle, they were surrounded by a group of young men, identified as 18-year-old Lonnie Watkins and his co-defendants 20-year-old Marcus Edwards, 20-year-old Michael Payne, and 15-year-old [M.A]. Mr. Watkins and his co-defendants were all armed with firearms and had planned to take the gold necklace that Mr. Christopher was wearing. As they confronted the two men, Mr. Watkins and his co-defendants opened fire, striking both Mr. Christopher and Mr. Industrious. They took the gold chain from Mr. Christopher's body and fled. One victim sustained 12 gunshot wounds, and the other sustained 7 gunshot wounds. Both men died as a result of their injuries.

**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 eighteen through twenty 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:** Mr. Watkins appeared before the Board for an initial hearing due to the Supreme Judicial Court's decision in Mattis. The Board considered the expert opinion of Dr. Long. Mr. Watkins has several medical conditions. He has been incarcerated for 32 years. He presents with insight into his actions. He has not received any disciplinary reports since 2017. He has earned his Hi-Set, engaged in rehabilitative programming, including Alternatives to Violence and Victim Offender Education Group. The Board considered the report of Ron Michaels, LICSW,

discussing Mr. Watkins' need areas in the community, including with regard to his medical needs. Mr. Watkins has support for his re-entry, including from his family. The Board considered the opposition testimony of Suffolk County ADA Montez Haywood, as well as written opposition from the victims' families. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Lonnie Watkins has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Approve home plan prior to release; Waive work for medical; Approve work plan before release; Must be home between 10 PM and 6 AM or at PO's discretion for curfew; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Supervise for drugs, testing in accordance with Agency policy; Supervise for liquor abstinence, testing in accordance with Agency policy; Report to assigned MA Parole Office on day of release; No contact with victim(s); No contact with victim(s)' family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment; Mandatory - sign medical releases.

*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.*

  
Angelo Gomez Jr., Chair

January 14, 2026  
Date