

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security

PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

MARCUS EDWARDS
W56709

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 27, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: October 23, 2025

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

VOTE: Parole is granted on/after 6 months in lower security to CRJ.¹

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On June 21, 1994, following a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court, Marcus Edwards was found guilty of two counts of first-degree murder and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On that same date, he received a 15 to 20 year concurrent sentence for armed robbery and a 3 to 5 year concurrent sentence for possession of a firearm.

Mr. Edwards 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 18 through 20 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, Mr. Edwards was re-sentenced on his first-degree murder conviction to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On May 27, 2025, Mr. Edwards 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. Edwards's May 27, 2025, hearing.

¹ One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in 2 years.

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 20-year-old Marcus Edwards and his co-defendants 20-year-old Michael Payne, 18-year-old Lonnie Watkins, and 15-year-old [M.A]. Mr. Edwards 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. Edwards 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.

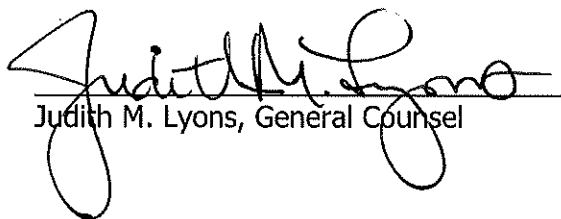
Where a parole candidate was convicted of first-degree murder for a crime committed when he was ages 18 through 20 years old, the Board considers the "unique aspects" of emerging adulthood that distinguish emerging adult offenders from older offenders. Commonwealth v. Mattis, 493 Mass. 216, 238 (2024). 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: Mr. Edwards presented for his initial hearing as a result of the Mattis decision. Mr. Edwards was 20-years-old at the time of the offense, and he is now 52-years-old. He has been incarcerated for 32 years. Mr. Edwards began to engage in rehabilitation and self-development in the early stages of his incarceration. He has minimal disciplinary reports and no violations during incarceration. Mr. Edwards has completed numerous rehabilitative programming including, but not exclusive to, Vocational Training, Restorative Justice, Violence

Reduction, and Criminal Thinking, and appears to have benefitted. Mr. Edwards is engaging in Wachusett College and is seeking to continue in the community. The Board considered the expert opinion and neuro-psychological testing conducted by Dr. Rojas. Dr. Rojas found that Mr. Edwards is at low risk for future violations and low risk for recidivism. Dr. Rojas also informed the Board as to the correlation between Mattis factors and his offense. Mr. Edwards has a strong support system and release plan to meet his needs. The Board considered public testimony from those speaking in support and from Suffolk County ADA Montez Haywood, who spoke in opposition to his parole, as well as a family member who spoke on behalf of both victims. The Board concludes that Mr. Edwards has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Waive work for 2 weeks; Electronic monitoring for 6 months then at PO's request for extension; 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; May have contact with [named individual]; No contact with victim's family; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment, PTSD, Depressive Disorder; Residential Program: CRJ.

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.


Judith M. Lyons, General Counsel

10/23/25
Date