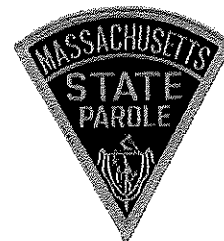




*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Public Safety and Security*



**PAROLE BOARD**

*12 Mercer Road*  
*Natick, Massachusetts 01760*

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*Telephone: (508)-650-4500*

*Facsimile: (508)-650-4598*

**Angelo Gomez, Jr.**  
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**RECORD OF DECISION**

**IN THE MATTER OF**

**RICHARD MAYES**  
**W40068**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Review Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** January 13, 2026

**DATE OF DECISION:** June 22, 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 CRJ on or after 2 weeks of the issuance of the decision.

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On November 2, 1983, after a jury trial in Berkshire Superior Court, Richard Mayes was convicted of second-degree murder in the death of his 2-year-old son Lawrence "Onaje" Jackson Ritchon. He was sentenced to life in prison with the possibility of parole. Parole was denied after an initial hearing in 1998. Mr. Mayes waived his 2003 review hearing. Parole was denied after review hearings in 2009, 2014, 2019, and 2023.

On January 13, 2026, Mr. Mayes appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was represented by student attorneys at Northeastern University School of Law. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Mayes's January 13, 2026, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** Between May 27 and 28, 1983, Richard Mayes (age 36) beat his son Lawrence Jackson Ritchon (Onaje) with a split plastic bat, his open hands, and his closed fists, just days before the child's third birthday. After beating the child, Mr. Mayes took him to the bathroom, removed his bloodied clothes, and attempted to clean the blood from them in soap and bleach. Mr. Mayes then put the child back into bed. When Mr. Mayes went to get Onaje the next morning, he found him lying on the bed "asleep" with a clear wet spot on the bed. Mr. Mayes got Onaje out of bed and into the bathroom, where Onaje vomited and went limp. Mr. Mayes called Onaje's mother for help, and the two began to perform CPR on Onaje. When he

didn't respond, Mr. Mayes left the apartment to get his cousin. He then told his cousin to drive Onaje and his mother to the hospital. Onaje was not breathing, nor did he have a pulse, when he arrived at the hospital. Mr. Mayes remained behind, told the remaining children to stay in their beds, and then went to hide and smoke marijuana in the attic.

After interviewing Onaje's mother at the hospital, police went to the apartment and found the three remaining children lying in their beds awake. The children stated that Mr. Mayes was the man who hit Onaje with the Wiffle ball bat. Police interviewed other witnesses, including a neighbor, who overheard the beating. While being interviewed at the police station, Mr. Mayes confessed to the beating of Onaje and further disclosed that he had been hitting the children for the last two years, including at least one severe incident when he knocked out the three front teeth of another son. Onaje died four days later, on May 31, 1983, having suffered fatal brain hemorrhaging from multiple blows to his skull. At the time of the medical examination, Onaje's body was covered with numerous bruises to the chest, stomach, back and legs.

**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.

**DECISION OF THE BOARD:** This was Mr. Mayes’ 7<sup>th</sup> appearance before the Board. He has been incarcerated for 42 years. He is currently 78 years old. He reports that has been sober for 30 years, and his last disciplinary report was 12 years ago. Mr. Mayes has remained employed. He has strong family support. He has taken accountability for his offense and has addressed the concerns of the Board. Mr. Mayes’ support system testified (and via written submission) that they will assist him with his re-entry needs. The Board also considered Mr. Mayes’ current age and medical needs in rendering its decision. The Board also notes that Mr. Mayes states he has continued to mentor younger inmates, including assisting them with applying for Pell grants. The Board considered testimony in support of parole from Mr. Mayes’s daughter. The Board also considered testimony in opposition to parole from Berkshire County Assistant District Attorney Sara Swan. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Richard Mayes has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

**SPECIAL CONDITIONS:** Waive work for SSI; Must be home between 10PM & 6AM or PO’s discretion; Electronic monitoring for 6 months; Must take prescribed medication: if prescribed; 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; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment; 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.*

  
Angelo Gomez Jr., Chair

June 22, 2026  
Date