

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

PERNELL SAUNDERS
W49218

TYPE OF HEARING: Review Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: October 16, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: March 12, 2026

PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS: Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz¹

VOTE: Parole is denied with a review 2 years from the date of the hearing²

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On October 16, 1990, Pernell Saunders was convicted in Middlesex Superior Court, after jury trial, of four counts of unarmed robbery. He was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole on two of these four convictions. Mr. Saunders was sentenced to concurrent terms of not more than 40 years and not less than 30 years in prison for each of the remaining two convictions for unarmed robbery. On January 7, 1991, in Suffolk Superior Court, Mr. Saunders pled guilty to one count of armed robbery. He was sentenced to a concurrent term of not more than 12 years and not less than 10 years in prison. On February 25, 1992, in Middlesex Superior Court, Mr. Saunders pled guilty to one count of unarmed robbery and one count of armed robbery. He was sentenced to concurrent terms of not more than 12 years and not less than 10 years in prison for each of these convictions. Parole was denied after an initial hearing in 2009. After a review hearing in 2011, Mr. Saunders was granted parole but the decision was rescinded. In 2016, Mr. Saunders was granted parole and released on parole supervision in August 2017. In September 2018, Mr. Saunders violated his parole and was returned to custody. On October 16, 2025, Pernell Saunders appeared before the Board for a review hearing. He was not represented by an attorney. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Saunder's, October 16, 2025, hearing.

¹ Board Member Ortiz was not present for the hearing but reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

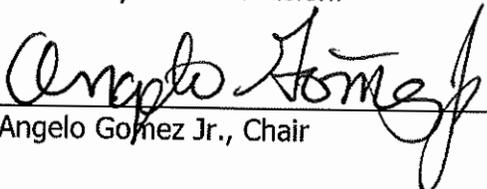
² One Board Member voted to grant parole to a long-term residential program after 90 days in lower security.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE: On September 7, 1989, Mr. Saunders escaped from the Boston Pre-Release Center, where he was serving a sentence for armed robbery. During September and October 1989, Mr. Saunders committed seven additional robberies, for which he is currently incarcerated. During these robberies, Mr. Saunders entered local shopping malls and targeted female cashiers in order to rob the establishments. Mr. Saunders was apprehended on November 1, 1989.

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. Saunders’ 4th appearance before the Board. Mr. Saunders was convicted of armed and unarmed robbery while on parole in 2019. He was returned to custody and served an intervening sentence. Precipitants to offenses were relapse. Mr. Saunders’ governing offenses also consisted of armed robbery and unarmed robbery precipitated by similar circumstances. While he has reinvested in treatment to address his addiction, his pattern leading up to the offenses on Parole is concerning as he failed to utilize his supports and treatment. Mr. Saunders was forthcoming in his hearing stating that when he uses, he commits crimes and does present as invested in addressing the root causes of his relapse and poor decision making. The Board recommends that he continues to work toward understanding his pattern, establishing a robust support system, and engage in programming that will assist him with his mental health. The Board concludes that Pernell Saunders has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

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

March 12, 2026
Date