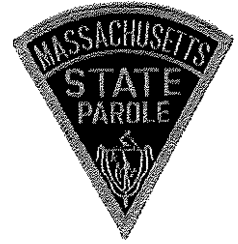




The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ROLANDO RODRIGUEZ
W65630

TYPE OF HEARING: Initial Hearing

DATE OF HEARING: May 7, 2025

DATE OF DECISION: October 23, 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 30 days from the date of Decision.²

PROCEDURAL HISTORY: On November 27, 1998, following a jury trial in Suffolk Superior Court, Rolando Rodriguez was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Kenia Melo. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On that same date, he received a concurrent 19–20-year sentence for armed robbery.

Rolando Rodriguez 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 in regard to Mr. Rodriguez's first-degree murder conviction, he was re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

¹ Acting Chair Coleman 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 but not before completion of 6 additional months in lower security.

On May 7, 2025, Rolando Rodriguez appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Lauren Russell. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Rolando Rodriguez's May 7, 2025, hearing.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE:³ On April 13, 1997, 18-year-old Rolando Rodriguez stabbed 32-year-old Kenia Melo to death while trying to rob the convenience store she owned with her husband. On the morning of the murder, Ms. Melo was working behind the counter of the store, while her husband slept in the downstairs stockroom and her 7-year-old daughter slept on a comforter beside her. At approximately 11:30 a.m., Rolando Rodriguez entered the store with a butcher knife, approached Ms. Melo, and demanded money. Ms. Melo refused, and Mr. Rodriguez jumped over the counter and attempted to open the cash register. Ms. Melo resisted his efforts, and the struggle woke up Ms. Melo's daughter. The two attempted to stop Mr. Rodriguez from opening the register. During the struggle, Mr. Rodriguez slashed Ms. Melo across the face with the butcher's knife and, then, when Ms. Melo's back was turned, stabbed her two times in the back. Ms. Melo's husband heard the struggle and ran upstairs. He observed Mr. Rodriguez leaving the store and fleeing the area. Ms. Melo was transported to the hospital, where she died one hour after the robbery.

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

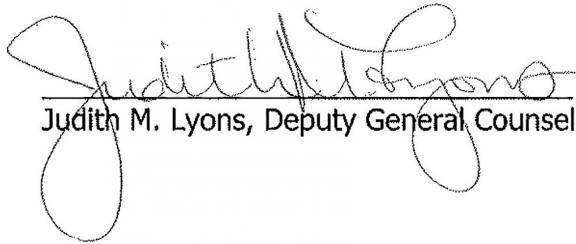
³ (Taken in part from the Commonwealth's Statement of the Case – No. 97-10799 dated June 6, 1997.)

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. Rodriguez made his initial appearance before the Board as a result of the SJC's Mattis decision. Mr. Rodriguez is currently housed in lower security. The Board reviewed Dr. Brown's evaluation and notes his risk assessment as exceptionally low risk. He scores as low risk on the LSCMI risk assessment tool. He has completed more than 50 rehabilitative programs and began investing in his rehabilitative efforts well before the Mattis decision. He has a minimal history of disciplinary reports during his years of incarceration. He presents with a comprehensive re-entry plan. Mr. Rodriguez has maintained his sobriety while incarcerated. The Board considered the testimony of the victim's family in opposition to parole. The Board also considered testimony in opposition to parole from Suffolk County Assistant District Attorney Montez Haywood. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Rolando Rodriguez has demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make his release compatible with the welfare of society.

SPECIAL CONDITIONS: Long-Term Residential Program; Waive work for 2 weeks or program; 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; No contact with victim(s); May have contact with [named individuals]; Must have mental health counseling for adjustment; AA at least 3 times per week.

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, Deputy General Counsel

10/23/25
Date