

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



**PAROLE BOARD**

*12 Mercer Road  
Natick, Massachusetts 01760*

**Maura T. Healey**  
*Governor*

**Kimberley Driscoll**  
*Lieutenant Governor*

**Gina K. Kwon**  
*Secretary*

*Telephone: (508)-650-4500*

*Facsimile: (508)-650-4598*

**Angelo Gomez, Jr.**  
*Chair*

**Lian Hogan**  
*Executive Director*

**RECORD OF DECISION  
In the Matter of**

**Victor Degro  
W61969**

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** August 28, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** February 12, 2026

**PARTICIPATING BOARD MEMBERS:** Edith J. Alexander, Dr. Charlene Bonner, Sarah B. Coughlin, Angelo Gomez Jr., James Kelcourse, Rafael Ortiz<sup>1</sup>

**VOTE:** Parole is denied with a review in 2 years from the date of the hearing.<sup>2</sup>

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On January 16, 1997, following a jury trial in Essex Superior Court, Victor Degro was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Daniel Santiago. He was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. On March 1, 2010, in Ayer District Court, Mr. Degro was found guilty of assault and battery and received a year on and after sentence for a crime while incarcerated.<sup>3</sup> On July 29, 2011, in Clinton District Court, Mr. Degro was found guilty of assault and battery on a public employee and received a 90-day concurrent sentence for a crime while incarcerated.

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

<sup>1</sup> Board Members Bonner and Coughlin were not present for the hearing but reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote. Board Member Coleman participated in the hearing but departed the Board prior to vote.

<sup>2</sup> One Board Member voted to deny parole with a review in 3 years.

<sup>3</sup> According to the Board of Probation, this sentence is closed.

On August 28, 2025, Mr. Degro appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. He was represented by Attorney Kelly Auer. The Board's decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mr. Degro's August 28, 2025, hearing.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On November 13, 1994, 20-year-old Victor Degro stabbed and killed 38-year-old Daniel Santiago in Lawrence. Mr. Degro approached Mr. Santiago outside of the apartment building in which they both lived, claiming he wanted to talk. Mr. Santiago indicated that he did not want to talk and turned toward the stairs of the apartment building. Mr. Degro followed Mr. Santiago and punched him in the mouth. Mr. Santiago fell against the balcony and hit his head. Mr. Santiago told Mr. Degro to leave him alone and began climbing the stairs to his apartment. Mr. Degro continued to pursue Mr. Santiago, repeating that he wanted to talk. When Mr. Santiago responded that they could talk the next day, Mr. Degro punched him again, knocking him backwards onto the stairs. Mr. Santiago started climbing the stairs again, but before he reached his apartment, Mr. Degro drew a knife and stabbed him three times, once in the back and twice in the leg. Members of Mr. Santiago's family opened the apartment door to see Mr. Degro stabbing Mr. Santiago. Mr. Santiago died at the scene shortly thereafter from the stab wounds. Mr. Degro was arrested in New Hampshire a day later and admitted to disposing the knife in the Merrimack River.

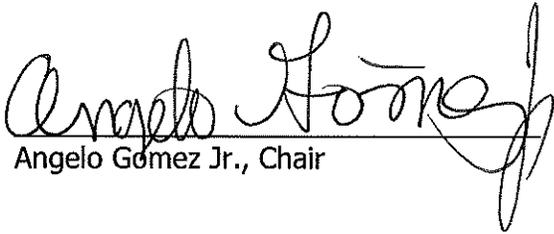
**APPLICABLE STANDARD:** Parole "[p]ermits shall be granted only if the Board is of the opinion, after consideration of a risk and needs assessment, that there is a reasonable probability that, if the prisoner is released with appropriate conditions and community supervision, the prisoner will live and 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:** Victor Degro appeared before the Board pursuant to the Mattis decision. The Board finds that Mr. Degro is only in the beginning stages of understanding his addiction. During his incarceration, he received 45 disciplinary reports, including multiple reports for substance misuse. He has engaged in minimal rehabilitative programming. The Board considered the forensic evaluation of Dr. Adams. The Board believes Mr. Degro can benefit from additional insight into his substance use issues and greater investment in rehabilitative programming, specifically to address criminogenic needs. The Board considered support testimony from Mr. Degro's family members. The Board also considered opposition testimony from the Essex District Attorney's Office. The Board concludes that Victor Degro 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

February 12, 2026  
Date