



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security



PAROLE BOARD

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RECORD OF DECISION

IN THE MATTER OF

ZENO WILLIAMS  
F80405

**TYPE OF HEARING:** Initial Hearing

**DATE OF HEARING:** September 25, 2025

**DATE OF DECISION:** March 11, 2025

**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.

**PROCEDURAL HISTORY:** On March 16, 2005, following a jury trial in Norfolk Superior Court, Zeno Williams<sup>2</sup> was convicted of murder in the first-degree for the death of Manuel Andrade, as well as armed robbery. They were sentenced to two concurrent sentences of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Mx. Williams 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 Mx. William’s first-degree murder conviction, they were re-sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

On September 25, 2025, Mx. Williams appeared before the Board for an initial hearing. They were represented by Attorney Valerie DePalma. The Board’s decision fully incorporates by reference the entire video recording of Mx. William’s September 25, 2025 hearing.

<sup>1</sup> Board Members Bonner and Alexander were not present for the hearing, but reviewed the video recording of the hearing and the entirety of the file prior to vote.

<sup>2</sup> Zeno Williams uses they/them pronouns.

**STATEMENT OF THE CASE:** On January 22, 2002, in Stoughton, 22-year-old Zeno Williams and a co-defendant stabbed and strangled 49-year-old Manuel Andrade, resulting in his death. Mr. Andrade had resided in the Archstone Apartments in Stoughton and had owned a cleaning business. Mx. Williams was familiar with Mr. Andrade and knew him to keep money in his home. Mx. Williams and their co-defendant told a friend that Mr. Andrade was involved in a case with Mx. Williams' family member, and that there could be payment involved in "taking him out." They sought the friend's participation and assistance in obtaining a gun, but the friend declined. On the day of the murder, Mx. Williams and their co-defendant entered Mr. Andrade's apartment building and hid in the laundry room, awaiting his arrival. They attacked Mr. Andrade, using a screwdriver to strike him in the neck, head, and shoulders. The co-defendant used an extension cord to strangle Mr. Andrade. Mx. Williams and their co-defendant then ransacked his apartment, looking for money and items of value.

A resident of the building saw a person, who fit Mx. Williams' description, leaving the laundry room and saw a "pair of legs" on the laundry room floor behind a trash barrel. Mx. Williams' fingerprints were located inside Mr. Andrade's apartment. The police later found Mr. Andrade's body inside his apartment in a taped-up trash bag.

**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:** Mx. Williams presented to the Parole Board for the first time. Mx. Williams was 20-years-old at the time of the offense and is now 44-years-old. Mx. Williams has been incarcerated for 24 years. The Board was concerned about Mx. Williams's level of accountability and minimization for their role in the offense. In addition, Mx. Williams has had a difficult adjustment, accruing over 100 disciplinary reports since incarceration. The Board notes Mx. Williams did require mental health hospitalization, but does appear to have stabilized in recent years. The Board notes Mx. Williams has invested in education, earning a BA; however, the Board encourages Mx. Williams to invest in insight, accountability, empathy, and healthy relationships. The Board considered the expert forensic evaluation and testimony of Dr. Herzog in rendering its opinion. The Board considered testimony in support of parole from Representative Sousa and Prisoners' Legal Services Attorney Tenneriello. The Board considered the testimony of Mr. Andrade's family members in opposition to parole. The Board also considered the testimony of Norfolk ADA Laura McLaughlin in opposition to parole. The Board recommends a longer period of positive adjustment and investment in the above need areas. The Board concludes by unanimous decision that Zeno Williams has not demonstrated a level of rehabilitation that would make their 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.*

  
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Angelo Gomez Jr., Chair

March 11, 2026  
Date