

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jennifer M. Zaccagnini
Chairperson



Telephone
(203) 805-6605

Fax
(203) 805-6652

BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

Application for Commutation Written Decision Form

A three-member panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles met to consider the Commutation application of the following and rendered their decision as outlined below. All decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

Date Submitted: 9/1/2023

Inmate #: 238008

Applicant Name: Miguel A. Sanchez

Applicant DOB: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date: 8/30/2023

Hearing Decision: Grant

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Chance, Joy

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Page, Rufaro

Vote: Grant

A Commutation Hearing was held on August 30, 2023, pursuant to the Board's authority established under Connecticut General Statute 54-130a.

Mr. Sanchez appeared before the Board without an attorney, choosing to represent himself pro se. Mr. Sanchez was found guilty by a jury of the charges of Murder and Carrying a Pistol without a Permit. On March 28, 2000, he was sentenced to (50) years for Murder, (5) years consecutive for Carrying a Pistol without a Permit and a (5) year consecutive enhancement penalty pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 54-202k. At the time of the offense, Mr. Sanchez was 17-years-old; he is currently 45-years-old and has served approximately (26) years of said sentence.

According to the Hartford Police investigation, officers responded to a report of an individual shot on Center Street. The victim was identified as an 18-year-old male with a gunshot wound to his head and was pronounced dead upon arrival at the hospital. The victim was involved in an altercation with Mr. Sanchez. According to the police reports, the victim approached Mr. Sanchez outside his home, and they exchanged words; both parties then left the scene and returned to their perspective homes. According to Mr. Sanchez, there were no words exchanged at this time between the parties. He stated he and two friends were sitting outside of his home when the victim and his friends

approached in a vehicle, stopped in front of them for a moment and then left. He then got up and went inside to watch television.

A short time later, Mr. Sanchez's friend came into his house and told him the victim and his friends had returned and words were exchanged. He turned and had a 30-second conversation with his friends about how to handle the situation. His friend's girlfriend retrieved two guns and upon exiting his home, a bottle was thrown at Mr. Sanchez, hitting him in the face. He expressed at the time he felt anger and fear and reacted impulsively. He fired his gun, fatally wounding the victim. Mr. Sanchez expressed, looking back now, he sees how stupid and impulsive his actions were. Of note, Mr. Sanchez was associated with the Latin Kings gang and the victim was associated with the Los Solidos gang. Although Mr. Sanchez denied the incident was gang-related, the police report indicated it was very much a gang-related incident.

Since his incarceration, Mr. Sanchez has completed several programs that include [REDACTED], both Alternatives to Violence Basic and Advanced, Gang Awareness, Voices, the Lifer's group, Parenting Program, Thresholds, [REDACTED] programs, and the HONOR program. In addition, he completed the following vocational programs and received certificates for electronics, and as a GED/ESL Instructor. He currently works as a shipping clerk in the correctional facility sign shop.

He has also participated in the Middlesex Community College program and obtained an Associate's Degree for Science in General Studies. He then applied to the Wesleyan University Liberal Arts program and obtained his Bachelor of Liberal Studies degree in May 2021.

Mr. Sanchez has received nine (9) disciplinary reports over the past 26 years. They include (2) SRG affiliation, (3) Contraband Class A, Disobey Direct Order, Violation of Unit Rules, Contraband Class B, and Possession of Sexual Materials. His last disciplinary report was in July 2014, when he made note to himself he cannot continue to receive tickets, as it is in conflict with how he is trying to change the course of his life. He has not received any additional tickets for the past 12 years. He shared he is not the same young angry person he was at age 17 when he entered prison; he has grown and is now a matured middle-aged man.

The Victim's Advocate read a statement from the victim's brother in which he expressed the family is still mourning the death of their brother, how life has not been the same since his death, and he is not in favor of this hearing. The victim's sister spoke on the phone and expressed she does not feel Mr. Sanchez deserves to go home. She stated he does not have any remorse and should serve all of his time. She also stated the incident was gang-related and both her brother and Mr. Sanchez were part of their perspective gangs.

A representative of the Office of the State's Attorney did not appear at the hearing or provide any position input.

During its deliberation, the panel considered the serious nature of the offense, criminal history, impact on the victim and his family, efforts towards rehabilitation through programming and education, total length of sentence and time served, and whether there are any exceptional or compelling circumstances present.

During deliberation, the panel found there were two exceptional circumstances that warranted a sentence reduction of Mr. Sanchez's sentence. The exceptional circumstances focus on Mr.

Sanchez's vocational program certifications in Electronics, GED/ESL Tutor, and Mechanical Certification where he is currently making signs and performing work duties as a shipping clerk. In addition, he has obtained an Associate's Degree from Middlesex Community College and a Bachelor's Degree in the Liberal Arts program from Wesleyan University. He is currently working on his Master's Degree at Wesleyan University, where he is also teaching a calculus class.

In a unanimous decision, the panel voted to grant a commutation for the sentence of Murder from (50) years to (35) years (a reduction of 15 years). Mr. Sanchez's total effective sentence is 45 years.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jennifer M. Zaccagnini
Chairperson



Telephone
(203) 805-6605

Fax
(203) 805-6652

BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

Application for Commutation Written Decision Form

A three-member panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles met to consider the Commutation application of the following and rendered their decision as outlined below. All decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

Date Submitted: 8/31/2023

Inmate #: 257120

Applicant Name: Bernard Smalls

Applicant DOB: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date: 8/30/2023

Hearing Decision: Deny

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Deny

Board Member: Chance, Joy

Vote: Deny

Board Member: Page, Rufaro

Vote: Deny

A commutation of sentence hearing was held on August 30, 2023, pursuant to the Board's authority established under Connecticut General Statute 54-130a.

Mr. Smalls appeared before the Board, represented by Attorney Alexander Taubes. Also present was Attorney John Doyle from the Office of the State's Attorney in New Haven and Victim Advocate Melissa DeJesus from the Office of Victim Services.

Mr. Smalls was convicted of Murder after a jury trial on December 7, 2001. The court imposed a sentence of (45) years on the Murder charge, a (5) year consecutive sentence enhancement pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 54-202k and a (10) year concurrent sentence for Risk of Injury to a Minor (which has expired). He committed the offense at the age of 20 and has served approximately 23 years of his sentence. The instant offense occurred on May 15, 2000, and involved a dispute on a basketball court between Mr. Smalls and the victim. Mr. Smalls left the scene and returned bearing a firearm, the argument resumed, and Mr. Smalls shot the victim. The victim's 12-year-old daughter was present and witnessed the shooting and, ultimately, her father's death. Prior to this offense, Mr. Smalls' criminal history included convictions for Disorderly Conduct, Criminal Attempt to Assault 2, Carrying a Pistol without a Permit and Violation of Probation.

Attorney Taubes provided a statement to the Board, in which he described a chaotic upbringing where Mr. Smalls had no involved parents and began using and selling drugs at a young age. He described Mr. Smalls' actions in the instant offense as a lapse in judgement and a moment of panic. He expressed the sentence imposed is not in line with contemporary sentencing standards, and he does not believe Mr. Smalls understood the offer presented in court prior to the trial. Mr. Smalls agreed it was not clearly communicated to him an offer of 25 years to serve would resolve all the charges pending against him.

While Mr. Smalls claimed to accept full responsibility for his victim's death, his version of events differed from those as provided by multiple witnesses. He expressed the gun "went off" when he lifted it, and he denied intending to shoot the victim. In addition, he denied knowing the victim's daughter was present during the argument leading up to the shooting. He did express ongoing remorse to the victim's family and admits he should not have been carrying a firearm in his car.

Mr. Smalls has completed programs during his incarceration to include [REDACTED], Thresholds, and [REDACTED]. He achieved his [REDACTED] in 2005 and has since completed vocational education programs to include Computer Repair, Wheelchair Repair and Carpentry. He was baptized in 2013 and has been working as a janitor since 2019. Prior work assignments have included positions as a tier man, in the laundry and in the plastic bag department. He looks forward to taking the Voices program, which was added to his Offender Accountability Plan late last year.

Mr. Smalls has received (6) disciplinary reports over the past 23 years. They include violations for Possession of Sexual Materials, Security Tampering, Insulting Language, Contraband Class B, Disobeying a Direct Order and Violation of Program Provisions. His last infraction was in 2012, when he believes his thinking began to change. He expressed he is not the same person he was when he entered prison and he is no longer angry.

The victim's daughter gave a statement during the hearing and adamantly opposed a commutation or any other form of relief. She was very emotional and screamed at Mr. Smalls while recounting the offense she witnessed as a child. She does not believe Mr. Smalls has changed or is remorseful, as he continues to lie about the details of the offense. She reported ongoing trauma is enhanced by continuous court proceedings, including a Habeas petition based on ineffective assistance of counsel heard in March of this year. Her mother (the victim's fiancée) followed with a statement of her own, expressing similar anger and objections to any early release. She added they feel tortured every time they must give victim statements. In addition, she informed the Board that Mr. Smalls has a Facebook page, where he speaks about getting out of prison soon.

State's Attorney John Doyle gave a statement at the hearing opposing a commutation of this sentence and disputing several of the claims made by Mr. Smalls regarding details of the offense. He informed the panel an appeal of Mr. Smalls' case was heard at both the appellate and supreme courts and his convictions and sentences were affirmed. In addition, claims of ineffective assistance of counsel have been rejected in Habeas court proceedings.

The panel discussed with Mr. Smalls Public Act 23-169 which entitles him to a future parole hearing due to his age at the time of the offense (20). Mr. Smalls acknowledged he is aware of this legislation, and he will be eligible for a hearing after serving 60 percent of his sentence.

During its deliberation, the Board considered the serious nature of the offense, criminal history, impact on the victim and his family, efforts towards rehabilitation through programming and education, total length of sentence and time served, and whether there are any exceptional or compelling circumstances present.

In a unanimous decision, the panel found there were no exceptional or compelling circumstances that would warrant commutation of the applicant's sentence.

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Ned Lamont
Governor

Jennifer M. Zaccagnini
Chairperson



Telephone
(203) 805-6605

Fax
(203) 805-6652

BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

Application for Commutation Written Decision Form

A three-member panel of the Board of Pardons and Paroles met to consider the Commutation application of the following and rendered their decision as outlined below. All decisions are final and not subject to appeal.

Date Submitted: 8/31/2023

Inmate #: 231802

Applicant Name: Corey Turner

Applicant DOB: [REDACTED]

Hearing Date: 8/30/2023

Hearing Decision: Deny

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Deny

Board Member: Chance, Joy

Vote: Deny

Board Member: Page, Rufaro

Vote: Deny

This hearing is being held in accordance with Connecticut General Statute 54-130a, which gives the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles the authority to commute a currently incarcerated individual's sentence after being convicted for a crime committed in the state.

A commutation hearing was held on August 30, 2023, for Mr. Corey Turner #231802, represented by Attorney Alexander Taubes. Mr. Turner was found guilty by a jury of his peers and sentenced to serve sixty (60) years on October 10, 1997, for Murder and Assault in the First Degree. Pursuant to said Statute, Mr. Turner meets the criteria by currently being incarcerated/convicted in the state, which supports his request to be heard today.

At the time of the offense, Mr. Turner was approximately 22-years-old. As of today, Mr. Turner is 49-years-old and has served over twenty-seven years (27) years of said sentence. According to the official records, police responded to a shots fired call with fatal wounds in the Hartford area on August 11, 1995. During the investigation, police found eight (8) nine millimeter casing at the scene of the crime and several witnesses implicated Mr. Turner as the shooter. He was arrested on March 14, 1996, and positively identified in a photo array as the shooter. Several witnesses reported the shooter was seen running up to the victim and shooting him several times at point blank range. The victim, shortly thereafter, succumbed to the injuries he sustained. It was said there was tension

between the victim and the offender due to both he and his brother being accused of robbing the victim on an earlier date. In speaking to Mr. Turner regarding the specifics of the offense, he accepted no responsibility and denied being involved in the offense. When questioned about his remorse for the victim involved, Mr. Turner explained he could not express remorse because he did not commit the crime.

Mr. Turner has a prior criminal history that includes multiple state convictions for Assault 3rd, Criminal Impersonation, Possession of Narcotics, New York Criminal Possession of Controlled Substance, New Jersey Under Influence without Prescription, Possession with Intent to Use, Hindering Own Apprehension and Fugitive from Justice.

Since his incarceration, Mr. Turner has demonstrated adequate institutional adjustment. He has not received a disciplinary infraction in over twenty (20) years, he has held employment in the law library for a number of years, and completed programming such as Parenting, [REDACTED] and Embracing Fatherhood, to name a few. Mr. Turner explained upon entering into the prison, he was an angry man because he did not belong there. However, when he met Eddie Ford, who he referred to as a “jailhouse lawyer,” his life changed. Mr. Ford explained to him the only way he can make a change in the system is to know the system, implying he learn the law. Mr. Turner explained how this was a pivotal point in his incarceration because he went from being an angry young man to a spiritual, well-versed man with integrity and a desire to help others. While helping others, he essentially helped himself by seeking ways to prove his innocence. Although he has worked diligently to have this conviction overturned, to date his efforts have proven unsuccessful. Mr. Turner says he will never stop working on his own case; but until then, he will continue to help anyone he can.

Attorney Taubes provided a statement to the Board advocating on his client’s behalf. He said there is evidence of offender change based on Mr. Turner’s institutional behavior, his program participation, and his dedication to helping those around him. He went on to say Mr. Turner’s work in the law library and knowledge of the law renders him suitable for employment upon release. The commutation application, submitted by Attorney Taubes, sought relief for Mr. Turner based on the applicant “not having tickets or disciplinary infractions in over 20 years,” his receiving a “sentence that was unfair and excessive because he was innocent,” and because it “would provide some relief from all the anxiety that has become an everyday part of life.” The last two reasons on the application say Mr. Turner is deserving of a commutation because, “he is an innocent man that has been in prison for 26 years” and that “it is time for him to come home.”

The victim’s advocate read a statement on the record expressing the deceased victim’s family’s opposition towards any kind of relief, because their loved one is never getting an opportunity to seek relief. They shared how tragic this loss was for the entire family and how the remaining family members have struggled to combat the grief associated with this loss. There was no State’s Attorney present to participate in the hearing, although she did submit an email stating she would not be available due to a conflict in scheduling.

During deliberation, the Board considered the seriousness of the offense, his criminal history, the impact on the victim and his family, his efforts towards rehabilitation through programming and education, the total length of his sentence, time served, and whether there were any exceptional or compelling circumstances present.

While deliberating, Attorney Taubes was unable to contain his disappointment, thus interrupting the panel’s discussion declaring none of us should be allowed to serve on the Board; the panel should all

be fired; that the panel was using Mr. Turner's innocence against him; and how our decision was a travesty to justice. Despite the efforts to mute Attorney Taubes' microphone and stop the insults, he repeatedly removed the mute off the microphone so that his outburst could be heard.

In a unanimous decision, the panel found there were no exceptional or compelling circumstances that would warrant commutation of the applicant's sentence.