

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: 11/30/2023

Inmate #: 103273

Applicant Name: Bruce Felder

Applicant DOB: 10/21/1964

Hearing Date: 11/29/2023

Hearing Decision: Grant

Board Member: Rodriguez, Sergio

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Turner, Nancy

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Grant

Having read, or read and heard, the full application of the above, the Board granted the application for the following reason(s):

A commutation of sentence hearing was held on November 29, 2023, pursuant to the Board's authority established under Connecticut General Statute § 54-130a.

Mr. Felder appeared before the Board represented by Attorney Matthew DeVito. Attorney Mambrino from the Office of the State's Attorney Hartford District submitted a letter opposing any sentence modification. There was no input from the victims in this case.

Mr. Felder was convicted after a jury trial of Larceny 1st and Larceny 2nd. On June 16, 2004, the court imposed a sentence of twenty (20) years on the Larceny 1st charge and ten (10) years consecutive on the Larceny 2nd for a total effective sentence of thirty years, with no supervision to follow. He was acquitted of the Robbery 1st degree and Assault 2nd degree charges. Additionally, he was convicted at a separate trial in 2002 of Robbery 1st degree and Larceny 3rd degree and received a twenty-year sentence. In that case he admits to "playing a part" as the driver and acknowledges he knew those he was with were robbing a bank. To date he has served twenty-one years of his thirty-year sentence. In 2022 an application for a sentence modification was denied.

Mr. Felder's instant offense occurred on August 16, 2002 in Hartford and was originally charged as a carjacking. Mr. Felder denies that he assaulted anyone or took a motor vehicle under duress. He claims he was enjoying recreational drugs with the two victims who asked him to take the car to go buy more drugs. He reports getting caught up with a dealer who asked for rides in exchange for free drugs. When the police apprehended Mr. Felder he was in possession of the key to the victim's car and involved in stripping the car with two other people. His criminal history dates back to 1981 and consists of convictions for larcenies, robberies, burglaries, sexual assault 4th degree, Assault 2nd, and multiple violations of probation. In 1994 he was convicted of Robbery 1st degree and Larceny 2nd degree in a similar carjacking scenario for which he also denied responsibility despite being found guilty by a jury and receiving a fourteen-year sentence. When questioned during the commutation hearing Mr. Felder he admitted responsibility for those crimes.

Attorney DeVito expressed to the Board that Mr. Felder's addiction led to his crimes and that he is now dedicated to recovery and self-improvement. He spoke of his client as honest and deserving of a modification of an "excessive" sentence. During this fifth period of incarceration Mr. Felder has been pursuing an Associate's Degree in Business Administration through the Pell Grant Program; he has completed half the necessary course work and intends to finish his degree. For eighteen years he has been employed in prison industries- both woodshop and textiles where he has developed strong skills and a solid work ethic. He has completed the following programs: Tier 1, Tier 2, Alternatives to Violence, and Skills of Socialization. In twenty-one years, he received just three disciplinary reports- all in 2004 and none involving violence.

Mr. Felder apologized to the victims describing his actions as greedy and selfish. When asked to clarify what he was apologizing for he spoke of "putting them in a bad place" describing the environment he left them in as risky. Mr. Felder described adopting a "tough and necessary transformation" to deal with his addiction to substances. He spoke of doing the work to get to the "root causes" which he describes as abuse inflicted by his father and the resulting low self-esteem that led him to be a follower just trying to fit in with his peers. He has engaged with a CCAR recovery coach and aspires to become a coach in the future. He also plans to attend NA/AA meetings and pursue step work. Though he reports losing ten family and friends while incarcerated, he says his support system is strong and includes a brother who is managing a family business. Mr. Felder hopes to use what he has learned through course work to help the business grow. He has a formal offer of employment with United Sewing and Design in Hartford that grew out of his textile work in the prison. He is asking for a halfway house in order to have the structure and guidance essential to successfully reintegrate after over two decades of incarceration.

State's Attorney Mambrino's letter opposing a commutation of this sentence follows on the heels of his unsuccessful request for a sentence modification. She believes that "Mr. Felder has not done anything of any significance since the denial of his sentence modification motion."

During its deliberation, the Board considered the serious nature of the offenses; his criminal history; all efforts towards rehabilitation through programming, employment and education; both the total length of sentence and time served; and whether there are any exceptional or compelling circumstances present. In recognition of Mr. Felder's efforts to address his criminogenic needs through rehabilitation, development of a positive release plan, creation of a multifaceted relapse prevention plan, establishment of realistic goals, and the lengthy sentence he received, the panel saw fit to reduce the sentence by (5) years.

In a unanimous decision, the panel voted to commute the Larceny 2nd sentence by five (5) years. This results in a reduction of his total effective sentence from thirty (30) years to twenty-five (25) years. The other sentences remain unchanged.

Submitted by: Nancy A. Turner

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: 11/30/2023

Inmate #: 187886

Applicant Name: Clark Clark

Applicant DOB: 2/18/1966

Hearing Date: 11/29/2023

Hearing Decision: Grant

Board Member: Rodriguez, Sergio

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Turner, Nancy

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Grant

Having read, or read and heard, the full application of the above, the Board granted the application for the following reason(s):

A commutation of sentence hearing was held on November 29, 2023, pursuant to the Board's authority established under Connecticut General Statute § 54-130a.

Herbert Clark (inmate number 187886) is serving a flat twenty-year sentence for one count of Assault first degree. The crime was committed on October 4, 2008, when he was forty-four years old. He rejected a plea deal of three years to serve and two years of Special Parole for an Assault 2nd conviction. Following a trial Mr. Clark was found guilty of Assault 1st degree and sentenced on August 16, 2010. He was denied an appeal of his sentence in 2014. He has never sought a sentence modification saying he did not think he would get relief. To date Mr. Clark has served nearly fourteen of the twenty years to which he was sentenced. In his 2023 application he cited the basis of his commutation as "evidence used at trial didn't meet the statutory definitions assault in the first degree." The New Britain arrest warrant dated November 18, 2008, originally charged Mr. Clark with Assault second degree and Disorderly Conduct.

At his November 29, 2023, Commutation Hearing Mr. Clark was not represented by counsel. There was no input provided from the victim or the state's attorney. He began by saying his sentence was long, he was

overcharged, and he felt he had “served enough time”. When asked about the crime witnessed by many patrons in a local New Britain sports bar and any admission of responsibility, Mr. Clark said he “did and did not do the crime” further explaining that while he did strike the victim’s face with his fist, he was not responsible for the injury (laceration) to the victim’s neck. He said he had “no answer” as to how the victim’s neck was cut.

Mr. Clark has a criminal history that dates back to 1982 and consists of convictions for multiple assaults, larcenies, drug possession/sales, and gun crimes. During this fourth period of incarceration, he has not had any disciplinary issues. He has held jobs in the marker shop and laundry receiving excellent evaluations. He completed the Anger Management program in 2023 (evaluation good). He has an extensive history of substance use (DOC drug/alcohol score of 3 out of 5). He has not yet participated in a treatment program through DOC’s Addiction Services citing that he was told he is too far away from his end-of-sentence date to be put in a program. He says he never wants to do drugs again but when asked does not appear to have a relapse prevention plan. He does believe himself to be an addict and has attended NA/AA meetings in the past thinking he could “control my addiction”. When asked how he has spent his incarceration Mr. Clark reports reading, working, and working on himself through writing and introspection. He does not have a support system saying he has no positive family members. He does not have a sponsor or a job offer. His work history primarily consists of eight years with a company where over eight years he advanced and gained experience to work as a hot tub technician. In his commutation application he reported he was laid off from this job and collecting unemployment benefits at the time of his crime. Upon release he reports having job leads as a technician and can reach out to past employer to work as a subcontractor. The 2010 PSI indicates his work performance at ThermoSpa, Inc. was inconsistent, erratic, and argumentative resulting in Mr. Clark’s termination from the company, which concluded they would not rehire him.

Following a period of questioning Mr. Clark, the Board deliberated during which time concerns were shared about his failure to fully accept responsibility for his crime and sufficiently engage in programming to address his criminogenic needs. He does appear to have new insights into his criminal thinking saying he previously blamed others for everything that happened to him and now he takes responsibility. He shared a desire to surround himself with positive people. Overall, his release plan and support system are weak which creates risks especially given his sentence does not provide for post-release supervision/support.

To afford Mr. Clark the opportunity for a brief period of discretionary parole to aide him in a successful transition back into the community, the Board voted unanimously to commute his twenty-year sentence by two (2) years for a new total effective sentence of eighteen (18) years. The Board encouraged Mr. Clark to pursue a program through DOC’s Addiction Services and to develop a robust relapse prevention plan prior to a discretionary parole hearing.

Submitted by: Nancy A. Turner

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: 11/29/2023

Inmate #: 215234

Applicant Name: Rashad Williams

Applicant DOB: 5/10/1975

Hearing Date: 11/29/2023

Hearing Decision: Grant

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Turner, Nancy

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Rodriguez, Sergio

Vote: Grant

Having read and heard the full application of the above, the Board granted the application for the following reason(s):

Mr. Rashad Williams, now known as Luis Montenegro, #215234 appeared before the Board for a commutation hearing on November 29, 2023. He was not represented by an attorney.

Mr. Williams was found guilty and sentenced on April 5, 2004, to 30 years on convictions for Conspiracy to Assault 1- Discharge a Firearm (15 years), Accessory to Assault 1 (15 years consecutive) and Criminal Attempt at Murder (15 years concurrent). He has a prior criminal history dating back to 1992 that includes: Tampering with a Motor Vehicle, Assault 2, Conspiracy and Accessory to Sale of Illegal Drugs. Mr. Williams was offered a plea deal of (7) years jail plus (5) years probation before opting to go to a jury trial. Mr. Williams has served 21 years of his 30-year sentence. Mr. Williams continues to maintain his innocence for what occurred during the offense. In his version, the victim shot his friend and his friend shot back defending himself.

Mr. Williams was extremely emotional during his opening statement. He spent most of his time proclaiming his innocence and acknowledging the loss of his friend. He focused his statement on describing the very long relationship with his friend and how that personal loss impacted his life. He relates that he was with his friends at the carwash to buy marijuana and wash his car. After his friend was

shot, he drove away because he was being shot at by the victim. He felt that he was unfairly given 30 years and the victim served no time when the victim was the one who shot and killed his friend and chased him.

During this incarceration, which began in 2004, Mr. Williams has accumulated (118) disciplinary reports, of which Public Indecency, Refusing Housing, Interfering with Safety and Security, Threats and Flagrant Disobedience are the majority. The latest disciplinary report was for Threats in February of 2022. It should be noted that he did have (2) Assault on Department of Correction Staff tickets in the beginning years of this sentence. During our interview, when asked to explain all his disciplinary reports, he took ownership of his earlier more violent ones. He explained he was angry over the death of his friend and the sentence he received. He then continued to explain that his recent ones were his way to refuse housing because it is traumatic for him to have a cell mate. Mr. Williams stated he was involved in a violent attack by a rival gang member while handcuffed in his cell at Northern correctional institution. He sued the State and received compensation for the damage that physically was caused to him. He continues to have access to a portion of that settlement and believes it will provide him financial stability upon his release. Mr. Williams thoroughly discussed the significant number of his disciplinary reports for public indecency; he shared that he was feeling exceptionally hopeless and in a dark place at that point of his incarceration which led him to make poor decisions. He struggled with an answer due to the delicate nature of his actions resulting in the disciplinary reports.

Mr. Williams has completed Anger Management and Domestic Violence programming while incarcerated. He also completed Interactive Skill Building and Passive Recreation. He acknowledges his participation in Anger Management, but had difficulty remembering attending Domestic Violence, being in Chronic Discipline and taking Interactive Skill Building and Passive Recreation. Mr. Williams worked during his incarceration in the capacity of Law Clerk in the library and as a cleaner during the COVID crisis. Although Mr. Williams could not elaborate on his participation in his documented programming, he was able to share what personal growth he has made during his 21 years of incarceration through the writing of his books, educational achievements, the learning a new language and his faith.

Mr. Williams shared that he has learned Spanish on his own and changed his name to Luis Montenegro, because he believes it will open new opportunities for him and help him adjust and be accepted when he moves to either Puerto Rico or Panama as part of his release plan. He says that prison didn't teach him what he needed to do to change, but credits his faith with playing a significant role in his growth. While in prison, he states he has become a writer and has written five books. He wants to continue his writing as a career.

There was no input from the victim or the Office of the State's Attorney.

Mr. Williams' release plan includes employment by way of writing and possibly publishing books. He stated that financially he felt comfortable because of the settlement he received. He desires to leave the country and move to Puerto Rico and then to Panama, because it is much cheaper to live there, he can have his family visit and would be able to leave something to them when he passes. He also feels it is a good choice given he has taught himself Spanish and desires to live in a Spanish-speaking community. As the conversation continued, he started to speak on the fact that staying in Connecticut was his mistake after his previous release. He mentioned he has too many negative connections in Connecticut and he understands the importance in not associating with negative individuals. He wants to keep his focus on associating himself with positive people and doing the right thing.

During deliberations, the panel considered the circumstances of the offense, efforts at rehabilitation, the total length of the sentence and the amount of time already served. The panel found a sentence reduction was warranted due to the insight Mr. Williams has gained from his incarceration, his efforts at improving his education, his self-reflection and understanding of his need to change, and the amount of time served (21 years) of his 30-year flat sentence.

In a unanimous decision, the panel voted to grant a commutation for the conviction of Accessory to Assault 1 reducing the 15-year sentence by (5) years, resulting in a new total effective sentence of (25) years.

Submitted by: Sergio Rodriguez

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: 11/29/2023

Inmate #: 277660

Applicant Name: Nathan Johnson

Applicant DOB: 5/31/1981

Hearing Date: 11/29/2023

Hearing Decision: Grant

Board Member: Zaccagnini, Jennifer

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Turner, Nancy

Vote: Grant

Board Member: Rodriguez, Sergio

Vote: Grant

Having read and heard the full application of the above, the Board granted the application for the following reason(s):

A commutation of sentence hearing was held on November 29, 2023, pursuant to the Board's authority established under Connecticut General Statute § 54-130a.

Mr. Johnson 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 Nina Vazquez from the Office of Victim Services.

Mr. Johnson was convicted after a jury trial of Assault 1st, Robbery 1st, Conspiracy to Commit Robbery 1st, No Pistol Permit, Criminal Weapon Possession and Interfering and Resisting Arrest. On July 15, 2011, the court imposed a sentence of (20) years on the Assault charge and (20) years consecutive on the Robbery. He was convicted and received a (20) year concurrent sentence on the Conspiracy to Robbery 1. Additionally, he was convicted on two separate previous gun charges on April 18, 2011, where he received 5 years consecutive on each charge. Therefore, the total effective sentence is 50 years.

Mr. Johnson stated that prior to going to trial, he was offered a plea deal of 18 years to serve. He committed the offense at the age of 29 and has served approximately 13 1/2 years of his sentence. The instant offense occurred on December 30, 2009, and involved the shooting of a victim five times in the back, which resulted in the victim being paralyzed from the chest down. Mr. Johnson admits to being in the area at the time of the shooting, but denies committing the offense. He admits to carrying a gun on a regular basis and being guilty of the weapon convictions. His criminal history includes convictions for Sale of Narcotics, Unlawful Transportation of a Weapon and Violation of Probation. At the time of the current offenses, he was serving a term of federal probation.

Attorney Taubes provided a statement to the Board, where he quoted Maya Angelou's poem, "Caged Bird." He expressed to the Board that Mr. Johnson has positive support in the community to include his mother, who is on the Board of Education, and a City Councilman from Hamden. Attorney Taubes spoke of how the offender continues to contribute to his community and family even from the inside. He expressed the sentence imposed is not in line with contemporary sentencing standards and believes his sentence was excessive.

Mr. Johnson expressed remorse to the victim and his family, and apologized for his ignorance and behavior at the trial. At the time of the trial, he had no empathy or understanding of their pain. Through his years in prison, he has learned to have compassion for others. Mr. Johnson further described the negative environment he grew up in, where he sought male role models in the streets of New Haven. He had a single mother who worked three jobs to support the family and an absent father who he would eventually spend time with, in the same prison. He witnessed violence, drugs, and criminal behavior that became normal to him. He believed that prison was his ultimate fate.

Mr. Johnson's behavior began to change when he encountered his cellmate, John Moye, who mentored him. Moye was a student at Wesleyan University and Johnson followed in his footsteps. He has completed eight courses in the Wesleyan Center for Prison Education since 2015. He also completed many appropriate programs to address his criminogenic needs to include Thresholds, Embracing Fatherhood, Tier II, People Empowering People and VOICES. He has held positions as tierman, food server, and in the marker shop. He is currently housed in the HONOR unit, a supportive community in the facility. He is currently in the Good Intentions Bad Choices program where he serves as a mentor to other inmates. In Tier II, he learned about triggers for substance abuse, such as negative peers and bad areas of town. The VOICES program helped him to understand things from the victim's perspective. From the Fatherhood program, he gained tools for avoiding the mistakes that his own father made. Good Intentions Bad Choices showed him that he was constantly choosing the wrong options for his life. From programming, he has learned how to control his anger and manage conflict. He gave an example of how he recently used his new interpersonal skills to diffuse a situation between another inmate and a Correction Officer.

Mr. Johnson has received (3) disciplinary reports over the past 13 years. His last infraction was in 2017 for intoxication, after he used marijuana when he learned that someone close to him died.

The Board received letters from the offender's friends and family members who all intend to support him when he returns to the community. He has a positive release plan that includes employment with Best Choice Home Healthcare. He is requesting halfway house placement to assist with his transition and afford him greater opportunities upon release. He plans to continue with his education and will seek mental health treatment. He hopes to give back to the community that he took from, and bring awareness to the youth about the damage the street environment can do. He looks forward to restoring his relationship with his teenaged son.

The victim's father, Vincent Jones, provided a statement via Victim Advocate Nina Vazquez. He opposes any type of relief as his son is permanently imprisoned. He shared that the victim is paralyzed from the chest down, relies on a wheelchair, and has ongoing medical and mental health issues. He believes that the offender is a threat to the community and the family is fearful of him.

State's Attorney John Doyle gave a statement at the hearing opposing a commutation of Mr. Johnson's sentence. He believes that Mr. Johnson has already had several chances throughout his criminal history. He stated the offender was not a young kid at the time of the instant offenses and was on probation for federal firearm charges as well. He reiterated the victim's injuries and believes the victim's family is re-traumatized at every hearing.

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 recognition of Mr. Johnson's efforts at rehabilitation, positive release plan, contributions to his community, and the lengthy sentence he received, the panel saw fit to reduce the sentence by (14) years.

In a unanimous decision, the panel voted to commute the Assault 1 sentence by seven (7) years and the Robbery 1 conviction by seven (7) years. This reduces each conviction from (20) years to (13) years. The other sentences remain unchanged. The total effective sentence is now (36) years.

Submitted by: Jennifer Medina Zaccagnini