

# **THE MARYLAND PAROLE COMMISSION**



## **FISCAL YEAR 2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services

### Maryland Parole Commission

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STATE OF MARYLAND

October 10, 2023

Wes Moore  
Governor

Aruna Miller  
Lt. Governor

Carolyn J. Scruggs  
Secretary

David Blumberg  
Chairman

The Honorable Secretary Scruggs  
Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Service  
Maryland Parole Commission  
6776 Reisterstown Rd.  
Baltimore, MD. 21215

Dear Secretary Scruggs,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the Maryland Parole Commission Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2023.

The report provides an overview of the agency, and reflects small changes, and accomplishments, outline in each unit.

During this reporting period, the Commission continues to perform satisfactorily under each Managing for Results objective while implementing new guidelines that follow with the Governor being removed from the process of approving parole for incarcerated individuals sentenced to life with the exception of the lifers whom seek medical parole. We continue to train both locally and nationally keeping current with the most recent trends in the field of discretionary release.

The commitment and dedication of the staff at the Commission makes it possible to operate in an efficient and effective manner to meet the organizational objectives without jeopardizing the safety of the citizens of the State of Maryland.

Sincerely,

David R. Blumberg  
Chairman

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Maryland Parole Commission aims to provide incarcerated individuals with timely parole and revocation hearings, strives to promote safe communities by promptly processing retake warrants, uses sound judgment in conjunction with utilizing validated risk assessment tools during the decision making process, encourages victim input when applicable, maintains strong relationships with other criminal justice agencies, allows access to the general public and releases those incarcerated individuals who have the potential to become law abiding citizens.



# OVERVIEW

Under Title 7 of the Correctional Services Article of the annotated Code of Maryland, the Maryland Parole Commission hears cases for parole release and revocation across the entire state, and are authorized to parole incarcerated individuals sentenced to a term of confinement of six months or more from any correctional institution in Maryland except the Patuxent Institution.

The Commissioners' are authorized to issue warrants for the return of alleged violators to custody and revoke supervision upon finding that a violation of the conditions of parole or mandatory supervision release has occurred. The Commission also makes recommendations to the Governor regarding pardons, commutations of sentences and parole of incarcerated individuals sentenced to life imprisonment requesting medical parole.

Currently, there are 8 commissioners including the Chairman, 7 hearing officers, and 51 other staff members employed at the Maryland Parole Commission.



# DEFINITIONS

- **ADMINISTRATIVE RELEASE** allows certain incarcerated individuals to be released without a hearing after serving one fourth of sentence and meeting other certain eligibility requirements created by the Justice Reinvestment Act (JRA).
- **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEWS** are not face-to-face hearings but rather “paper” reviews of incarcerated individual files at the Commission office. These reviews are conducted at five-year intervals until an incarcerated individual reaches parole eligibility and ensures that all the essential documents and institutional adjustment summaries necessary for a parole hearing are obtained and placed in a case file.
- **COMMISSION CASES** are heard by a panel of two Commissioners and include cases with a loss of life, life sentences, or life sentences with all but a fixed number of years suspended, and open parole hearings.
- **GERIATRIC PAROLE** allows incarcerated individuals that have reached the age of sixty to petition the parole commission for relief under certain criteria established by the Maryland Parole Commission.
- **GUBERNATORIAL PARDON** absolves the grantee of guilt for his criminal act(s), and exempts the grantee from the resulting penalties. Criteria for the pardon consideration are set by the Governor and normally require the passage of a substantial period following the end of the incarceration or any form of supervision before a pardon will be entertained.
- **HEARING OFFICER CASES** are non-Commissioner cases heard by the Hearing Officers who make recommendations reviewed by Commissioners. If the reviewing Commissioner agrees with the Hearing Officers recommendation, that recommendation becomes the Commissioners decision. An incarcerated individual may appeal this decision to a panel of two Commissioners. In instances where the reviewing Commissioner does not adopt the Hearing Officers recommendation, an in house appeal results and a panel of two Commissioners make a final decision that is not appealable by the incarcerated individual.
- **INTERESTED PARTY** is an individual who is not a “victim” but rather an individual who has a “special interest” in the status of the incarcerated individuals as determined by the Commissioners Victim Services Coordinator.
- **JUSTICE REINVESTMENT ACT (JRA)** Bill passed by the Maryland General Assembly that became law on October 1, 2017. The JRA seeks to reduce Maryland’s prison population and use the savings to provide more effective treatment before, during, and after incarceration. The intention is to reduce the likelihood of reoffending, as well as to benefit victims and families. The specific parts of the JRA that pertain to the Maryland Parole Commission provide for administrative release, and caps for technical violations of parole or mandatory release.
- **LIAISON AGENT/ WAIVER (LAW)** hearings are revocation hearings conducted by the Commissioners on incarcerated individuals who have “technical” violations and admit fault/guilt to the

stated violations. These incarcerated individuals waive the presence of an attorney or their agent of record. For these hearings, the Division of Parole and Probation LAW unit provides an agent to act as a liaison agent who testifies during the entire docket as to the facts of each case using information provided by the agent of record.

- **MEDICAL PAROLE** allows consideration for an incarcerated individual who is chronically debilitated, or incapacitated by a medical or mental health condition, disease or syndrome as to be physically incapable of presenting a danger to society to be released on medical parole at any time during the term of that inmate's sentence without regard to parole eligibility.
- **MANDATORY SUPERVISION RELEASE** is the release of an incarcerated individual from the Division of Correction due to diminution credits earned and awarded. The incarcerated individuals are supervised by parole agents and are subject to the jurisdiction of the Commission after release until the maximum expiration of their sentence. Any alleged violation of mandatory release supervision conditions may result in a revocation hearing.
- **OPEN PAROLE HEARINGS** are essentially the same as regular parole grant hearings except it has been opened to the public at the request of the victim or victims representative who is permitted to speak at this hearing. Individuals must make a request in writing to attend these proceedings and the Commission determines who may or may not attend. Open hearings are conducted by two Commissioners.
- **PAROLE** is the discretionary and conditional release of an incarcerated individual into the community by the Commission to continue serving the term of confinement under the supervision of an agent of the DPSCS Community Supervision Unit until the expiration of the full, undiminished term. If any conditions of parole are violated, the incarcerated individual is subject to revocation and re-incarceration.
- **PAROLE IN ABSENTIA** a parole hearing that occurs when an incarcerated individual is housed in a jurisdiction outside the State of Maryland.
- **PAROLE ELIGIBILITY** is determined by sentence length and the specific crime (s) for which the incarcerated individual is incarcerated.
- **PAROLE GRANT HEARING** is an interview with the incarcerated individual conducted by a Commission panel or Hearing Officer to elicit information from and about the incarcerated individual. This interview along with information contained in the parole file form the basis of the Commissions' decisions.
- **PRELIMINARY REVOCATION HEARING** is held before a Hearing Officer who determines if probable cause exists with respect to the stated violations. If probable cause is found, the incarcerated individual is scheduled for a revocation hearing before a Commissioner. Alleged violators may elect to have or waive preliminary revocation hearings.
- **PUBLIC SAFETY PROGRAM** is an agreement between the incarcerated individual and the Commission in which the incarcerated individual is granted discretionary parole with the stipulation that he/she will received services through the program provided to those returning to Baltimore City.

- **REVOCAION HEARINGS** are conducted by Commissioners on those incarcerated individuals who allegedly have violated the conditions of parole or mandatory supervision and are returned to the custody of the Division of Correction or a local detention facility. The supervising agent, who initiated the retake warrant process testifies at this hearing and is subject to cross-examination. The Public Defenders Office or a private attorney represents offenders.
- **VICTIM** is a person (or a designated family member of a deceased person) who has suffered actual or threatened physical, emotional, or financial harm as a direct result of a crime.



## FISCAL YEAR 2023, HIGHLIGHTS

- Chairman Blumberg completed his 2023 year as Chairman of the Commission. He is the longest serving leader of a Parole Board in the country.
- Commissioner Steven DeBoy retired March 1, 2023, and Commissioner Jane Miller was appointed by the Department of Justice as a Federal Immigration Judge this summer, and left the Commission in September.
- Covid 19 has had some impact on hearings as fewer people entered the prison system, which resulted in less incarcerated individuals being parole eligible.
- From the inception of the Justice Reinvestment Act 10/1/2017 the Parole Commission Hearing Officers are continuing to conduct screening of eligible incarcerated individuals at intake, and once minimum parole eligibility is met incarcerated individuals are administratively released without the need of a parole hearing if they qualify.

# **COMMISSION UNITS**

## **ADMINISTRATION**

Oversees daily operations of the Commission and ensures compliance with statutory requirements. Responds to Public Information Act requests, processes candidates for Public Safety Program, fee waiver and travel requests.

## **INSTITUTIONAL PAROLE ASSOCIATES**

Institutional Parole Associates (IPA) are assigned in each region to relay information between the Commission and the Department of Correction (DOC). They serve parole decisions to incarcerated individuals and coordinate releases statewide. They are also responsible for ensuring attendees of Open Parole Hearings are informed of the process and provided an opportunity to ask questions.

## **PARDON AND EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY UNIT**

This unit is responsible for reviewing and processing all pardon and executive clemency applications; reviewing and distributing all medical and geriatric parole requests; and handles all correspondence between the Parole Commission and the Governor's Office.

## **PAROLE SERVICES UNIT**

The Parole Services Unit handles all scheduling and docketing of parole hearings for the Department of Correction (DOC), and local detention facilities to include parole in absentia cases where Maryland incarcerated individuals are serving sentences in other states. They also open cases and preliminarily calculate parole eligibility.

## **POST- RELEASE UNITS**

The Warrant Unit is responsible for preparing and processing retake warrants, notifying outside jurisdictions of pending parole violations, and updating the appropriate databases for each case.

The NCIC Unit ensures warrants are tracked appropriately in the national database and responds to inquiries from law enforcement and other jurisdictions.

The Revocation Unit is responsible for scheduling preliminary hearings, issuing subpoenas, and scheduling both revocation and Liaison Agent Waiver (LAWS) hearings for incarcerated individuals charged with violating the terms of supervision. This unit coordinates with private attorneys and public defenders to provide representation to these individuals.

## **RECORDS UNIT**

The Records Unit maintains files on all incarcerated individuals until five years past the maximum expiration of sentence. This includes currently incarcerated individuals as well as those under supervision by the Division

of Parole and Probation. This Unit is also responsible for retrieving and processing supervision reports and warrant requests from the Division of Parole and Probation.

### **RELEASE UNIT**

The Release Unit is responsible for preparing parole release orders and coordinating releases for incarcerated individuals granted parole from the Division of Correction and local detention facilities statewide.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES UNIT**

The Support Services Unit handles time keeping and personnel matters, travel arrangements, fleet usage and maintenance, supplies and property inventory, secure access for employees, and training.

### **SECRETARIAL UNIT**

The Secretarial Unit provides support to Commissioners and Hearing Officers during video dockets, processes decisions, handles incarcerated individuals appeals, and updates information in the DPSCS database. They also provide general secretarial support to the agency.

### **VICTIM SERVICES UNIT**

The Victim Services Unit ensures timely notification to victims and/or their representatives of hearings, decisions, and release dates. They also advise victims of their right to “open” a parole hearing and are responsible for scheduling and coordinating these hearings. In addition, the Unit advises victims or their representatives of their rights and provides referrals for services when appropriate.

# STATISTICAL INFORMATION OF WORK PRODUCTION

**5,808** Parole Hearing conducted  
In DPSCS & Local Detention Centers

**1,361** Warrants issued

**86** Subpoenas issued

**780** Released on Parole  
From DPSCS and Local Detention Centers

**20** Medical Parole Granted

**38** Pardons Granted

**5370** Agent Reports Processed  
By the Records Unit

**3445** Letters sent to victims and or representatives

**62** Open Parole Hearings

# **COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES**

**David R Blumberg- Chairman**- appointed as a Commissioner October 2003; appointed Chairman July 1, 2004; continuing for four consecutive terms, which will expire in December 2027. Chairman Blumberg received a BA degree in political Science from Loyola College and a MS degree in Library Science from the University of Maryland. For twenty years, he was the director of the Baltimore City Detention Center Enoch Pratt Library. Chairman Blumberg is Chairman of Santa Claus Anonymous, member of Beta Phi Mu International Society for Library & Information Studies, Secretary of the Hampden Midtown Kiwanis, as well as 2020 recipient of the Vincent O-Leary Award for continued work and notable achievements in demonstrating his commitment to exploring and promoting sound decisions in discretionary releases. In May 2015, the Association of Paroling Authorities International; (APAI) a worldwide organization representing all releasing authorities, recognized Chairman Blumberg with the Ben Baer Award; this award was established to recognize and reward an individual who has demonstrated significant service in the field of parole or community corrections. Chairman Blumberg was President of APAI from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2022 as his term ended.

**Sam Billotti IV** – appointed July 2019; term to expire December 2024. Commissioner Billotti received a BA degree from Shepherd College and JD degree from University of Baltimore School of Law. For the six years prior to his appointment, he was in the private practice of law in the area of Criminal Defense, Civil, and Estate Work. Commissioner Billotti started his working career in law enforcement with the Frederick County Sheriff's Office where he rose to the rank of Lieutenant, and retired after twenty years of service with the agency. He then moved on to the Washington County Sheriff's Office and commanded several sections of the Office at the rank of Major, before retiring to practice of law.

**John W. E. Cluster Jr.** – appointed December 2021; term to expire December 2027. Born in Baltimore Maryland, graduated Catonsville High School 1972, and attended Essex Community College. Commissioner Cluster is a former member of the Maryland House of Delegates from July 2003 to January 2007, January 2011 to July 2016; resigned from membership in July 2016. While serving in the House of Delegates he was honored to be named Legislator of the year many times from the law enforcement community. As a member of the House he served in both the House Environmental Matters from 2003-2007 and House Judiciary Committees 2011-2016. Prior to the House Delegates, Commissioner Cluster worked as the Director of Facilities at the Department of Juvenile Services 2003. Member of Charles H. Hickey Jr., School Advisory Board, 2005-07. Chair, Maryland Correctional Enterprises Management Council, 2015-16.

**Jason Keckler** -appointed in January 2018; term will expire December 2023. Commissioner Keckler retired from the Frederick Police Department as a Lieutenant with 22 years of service. He possesses numerous certifications and was a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police and International Association of Ethics Trainers. He remains actively involved in the FBI National Academy Associates. Commissioner Keckler is a graduate of the 246<sup>th</sup> Session of the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia. In addition to holding college degrees from Frederick Community College and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, he possesses a Graduate Certificate in Criminal Justice Education from the University of Virginia.

**Robyn Erica Lyles** - appointed January 2020; term to expire December 2025. Commissioner Lyles is a twenty five-year criminal justice professional. She received her Bachelors of Science degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice from the University of Missouri – St. Louis and her Masters of Science degree in the same field from the University of Baltimore. Commissioner Lyles has worked for the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services since August of 2004, as the Policy Management Unit Director for the Information Technology and Communications Division, and now as a Commissioner. Since August of 2011, she has been an Adjunct Instructor at Stevenson University. Commissioner Lyles is an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, a member of the Ladies of Vision Charities, Incorporated where she serves as the Bylaws Chairman and a member of the Monumental Bar Association, where she is the Secretary.

**Anthony McAllister** - appointed February 2022 to an interim term expiring December 2023. Commissioner McAllister is a graduate of Saint Augustine's College, now a University, and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Organizational Communications. Commissioner McAllister diligently served Alexandria Virginia for the past 30 years as a Juvenile Probation/Parole Officer. In this capacity, he assisted many youth and families in moving from a place of trouble to become vital and in some cases prominent members of their communities and society. While with Alexandria Court Services Unit, Commissioner McAllister held leadership positions such as a member of the Inaugural Alexandria Virginia's Super Family Assessment and Planning Team (FAPT), former facilitator for the Alexandria Court Service Unit's Conflict Resolution Group, and he prominently served on the Northern Virginia Region's Violent Felony Review Committee. In 2009, Commissioner McAllister was honored to be named employee of the year of the Alexandria Juvenile Court Service Unit, for his outstanding and diligent work. In 2019, Commissioner McAllister was appointed by Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks to the newly formed Commission on Fathers Men and Boys.

**John D. Smack**- appointed August 2016: Commissioner Smack was reappointed in January 2021; term to expire December 2026. Commissioner Smack retired in July 2016 from the Worcester County Sheriff's Office at the rank of Chief Deputy with 29 years of law enforcement experience. Commissioner Smack served as a commander in Patrol, SWAT and Special Operations. Smack received additional training from the University of Louisville, Southern Police Institute and FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development. Smack was elected as an Orphans' Court Judge for Worcester County in 2006, 2010 and 2014. In 2014, Smack was appointed by Governor Hogan, as the Chief Judge until his current appointment. He has served with several organizations in his community as a member of the Board of Directors and as President.

**Lisa Vronch** - appointed December 2019; term to expire December 2024. Commissioner Vronch graduated from the University of Baltimore with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice. In 1984, she graduated from the University of Maryland Police Department Training Academy and served on the police department at the University of Maryland Baltimore until 1988, and the Anne Arundel County Police Department until 1999. Since then Commissioner Vronch worked in the science and technology fields at the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security, and the United States Army Research Laboratory, managing various technology portfolios. Most recently, Commissioner Vronch worked in that Information Technology and Communication Division of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services managing the criminal history and law enforcement systems. Commissioner Vronch is an active member of the Project Management Institute, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International Standards Development E-54 Committee, the National Criminal Justice Association, the American Society for Public Administration, and the American Institution of Conservation.

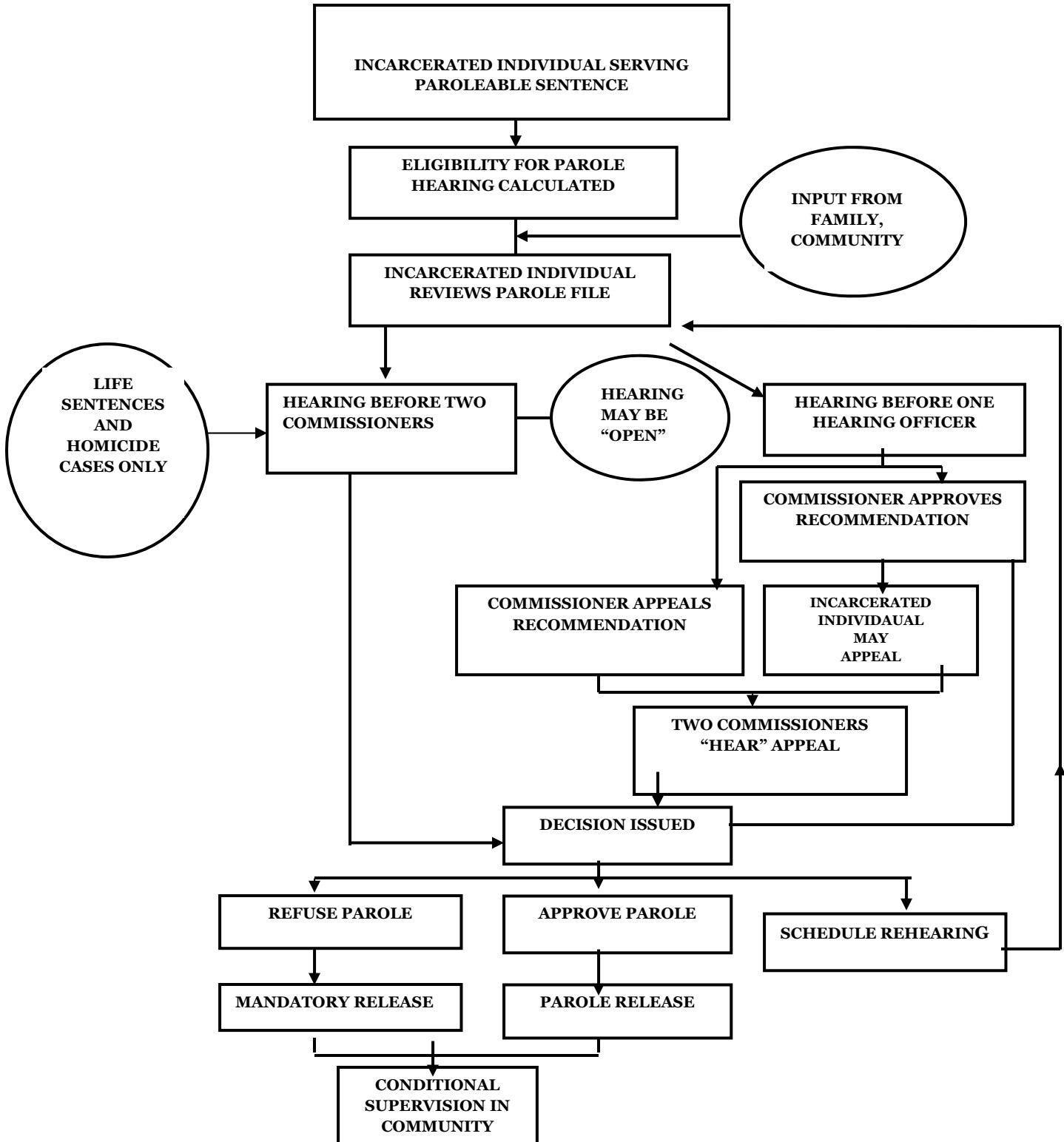
## **APPENDIX I: STANDARD CONDITIONS OF PAROLE**

- 1. Report as directed to and follow your Parole Agent's instructions.**
- 2. Work regularly.**
- 3. Get permission before:**
  - a. Changing your home;**
  - b. Changing your job; or**
  - c. Leaving the State of Maryland**
- 4. Obey all laws.**
- 5. Notify your Parole Agent immediately if you are arrested.**
- 6. You shall not illegally possess, use, or sell any narcotic drug, "controlled dangerous substance", or related paraphernalia.**
- 7. You shall not own, possess, use, sell, or have under your control any dangerous weapon or firearms of any description without approval of the Parole Commission.**
- 8. You shall so conduct yourself as not to present a danger to yourself or others.**
- 9. Special conditions: See page 1 of this agreement.**

**NOTE: Conditions 10 and 11 apply to parolees whose term of confinement resulted from a crime or crimes committed on or after May 1, 1991.**

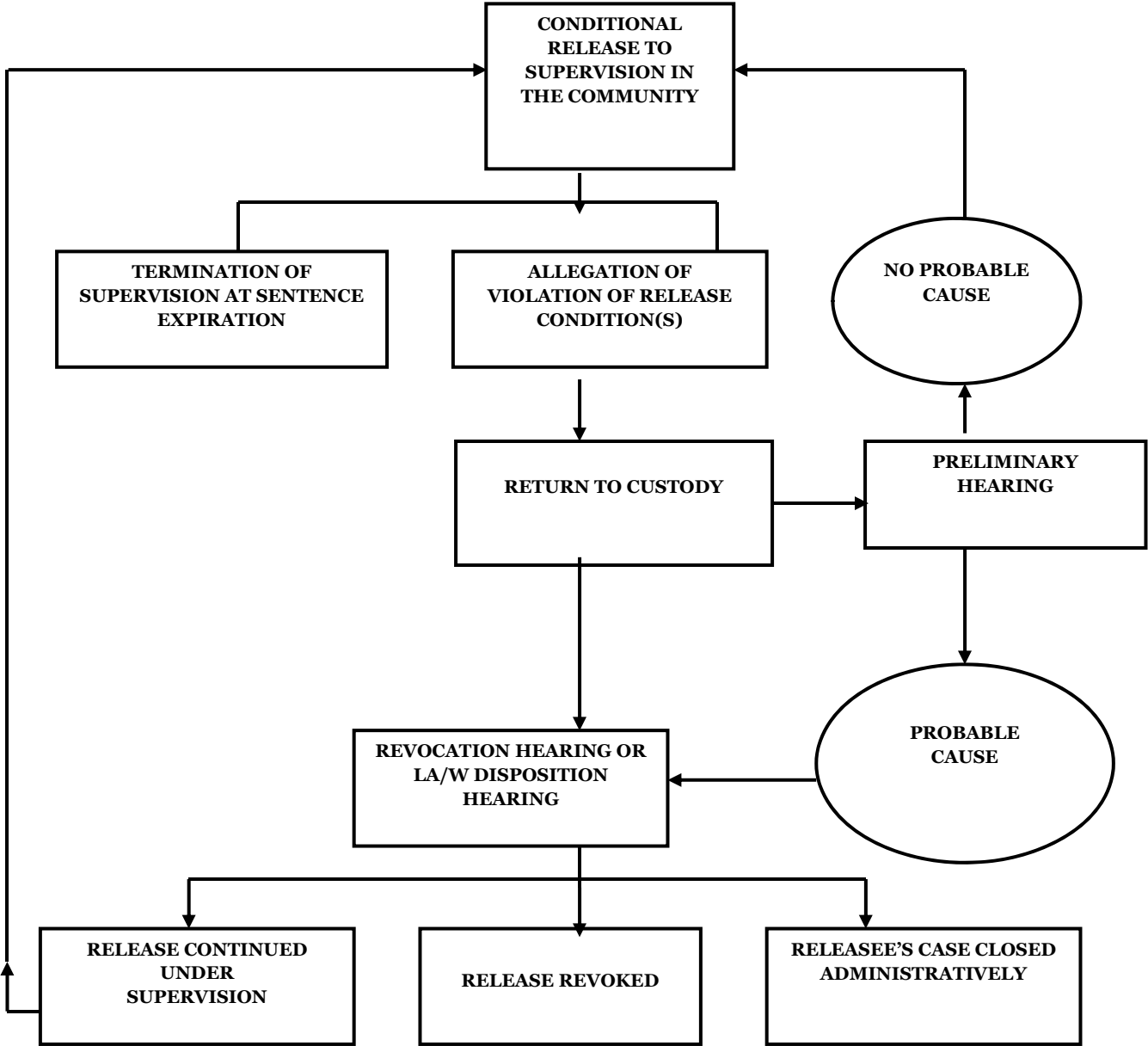
- 10. You must pay a monthly supervision fee as required by law unless the Parole Commission exempts you wholly or partly from payment of the fee.**
- 11. If ordered by the Parole Commission to undergo drug or alcohol abuse testing, you must pay for the testing if required to do so by the Division of Parole and Probation**

# APPENDIX II: PAROLE HEARING FLOW CHART





# APPENDIX III: PAROLE AND MANDATORY SUPERVISION PROCESS FLOW CHART



# BUDGET EXPENDITURE – FISCAL YEAR

CATERGORY	EXPENDITURES	% of Exp.
COMMUNICATION	26,401	0.47%
CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	131,487	2.18%
FUEL & UTILITIES	16,635	0.28%
MV OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE	29,945	0.05%
REPLACEMENT EQUIPMENT	9	0.01%
FIXED CHARGES	183,117	3.03%
SALARIES, WAGES, AND FRINGE BENEFITS	5, 580,650	92.36%
SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	27,573	0.41%
TECHNICL/SPECIAL FEES/TEMP STAFF	34,737	0.57%
TRAVEL	<u>14,477</u>	0.24%
	6,045,031	
 Total Expenditure:		 6,045,031
Less Salaries/Fees:		<u>5,580,650</u>
		464,381
 Less Lease (Fixed Charges):		 <u>183,117</u>
Controllable Expenditures:		281,264