



January 10, 2022

Honorable Camera Bartolotta
Honorable Art Haywood

Via electronic delivery

Re: 3-2 Vote by the Board of Pardons

Dear Senator Bartolotta and Senator Haywood:

Thank you for your commitment to criminal justice reform, and for [signaling your intent to introduce legislation to move away from the current unanimous voting requirement at the Board of Pardons](#). We ask you to slightly amend your proposal to require a 3-2 Board of Pardons vote, instead of the 4-1 vote mentioned in your recent cosponsor memo. Data and family input show that a 4-1 vote would have little effect; if any. Only a tiny handful of people in decades have been denied by 4-1 vote. A majority 3-2 vote is *absolutely necessary* to make commutation a more robust second look mechanism for Pennsylvanians.

FAMM's members consist of thousands of families across Pennsylvania who cross the political, geographic, and racial spectrum. Clemency is the only hope of relief for our loved ones serving very long and life without parole sentences. Pennsylvania's governors commuted the life sentences of 285 people between 1971 and 1994, but that number dropped by more than 90 percent over the following two decades. Commutations are a necessary mechanism to address injustice and support second chances, and their use should be substantially increased, particularly as the rate of elderly and sick people in Pennsylvania prisons skyrockets. **We greatly appreciate your leadership on this issue. Please amend your proposal to create a 3-2 vote requirement instead of 4-1.**

See also FAMM's [position on expanding clemency](#); report "[Time for Justice: The Urgent Need for Second Chances in Pennsylvania's Sentencing System](#)" (history of clemency including data); [March 2022 letter to clemency officials](#) (endorsing a 3-2 vote change and suggesting process improvement); [August 2022 letter to clemency officials](#) (requesting that the Board of Pardons provide reasons for clemency grants and denials).

Thank you for considering our views. Please contact me at (717) 945-9089 or mgoellner@famm.org with questions or to discuss this matter further.

Respectfully,

/s Maria Goellner
Maria Goellner, Esquire
Deputy Policy Director, [FAMM](#)



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