

Bill Summary: Missouri Geriatric Parole SB 1294, Senator Williams

The bill: [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1294](#) would, if passed, create a geriatric parole system in Missouri and establish comprehensive eligibility requirements for people in state prisons. This bill would provide the parole board with clear assessment criteria and decision-making protocols, as well as require the parole board and Department of Corrections to report relevant data to the legislature on a regular basis. **FAMM supports this bill.**

Bill status: This bill was introduced by Senator Brian Williams and is pending.

What the bill would do: SB 1294 would create a mechanism for aging incarcerated people in Missouri state prisons to petition the parole board for release if they are:

- Serving a sentence for a felony offense; and
- 55 years old with 15 years of time served; or
- 60 years old with 10 years of time served; or
- 65 years old with 5 years of time served.

If a person is eligible and petitions, the parole board must hold a hearing but parole itself is fully discretionary. The parole board does *not have* to grant parole and there is no automatic release. In order to grant parole under this bill, the parole board must consider relevant factors, including the risk to the community, institutional behavior, ability of the Department to care for the individual and costs, psychological and physical condition, release plan, etc. Individuals would have the right to counsel and to present evidence. The bill also requires prisons and the parole board to notify people of eligibility, and report relevant data to the legislature regularly.

Why the Bill is Needed: Missouri has a ballooning geriatric prison population, and the state is wasting taxpayer dollars incarcerating people who pose little to no risk to public safety. It is well known that people age out of crime, and older people cost an estimated three to nine times more to incarcerate than their younger counterparts.¹ By 2030, approximately one-third of the prison population will be individuals aged 55 and older.² We are less safe when the state wastes taxpayer dollars on policies that don't work. Geriatric parole relieves the state of the costs associated with significant medical care, including terminal and end of life care. The savings from geriatric parole can be diverted to programs that do protect the public and help today's victims.

For more information, contact FAMM's Director of State Policy Maria Goellner at (717) 945-9089 or mgoellner@famm.org.

¹ Cyrus Ahalt et al., Paying the Price: The Pressing Need for Quality, Cost, and Outcomes Data to Improve Correctional Health Care for Older Prisoners, 61 J. of the Am. Geriatrics Society 2013, 2014 (2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3984258/>.

² George Pro & Miesha Marzell, Medical Parole and Aging Prisoners: A Qualitative Study, 23 J. of Correctional Health Care 162, 162 (2017), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28358232>

