



## Bill Summary: Illinois Geriatric Parole HB 2045 (Slaughter)

**What the Bill Would Do:** HB 2045 would, if passed, create a geriatric parole system in Illinois. Illinois currently does not have a process to release elderly people in its state prisons. Under the bill, people would become eligible for geriatric parole at age 55 or older, if they have served at least 25 consecutive years of their prison sentence.

**FAMM's Position:** FAMM supports HB 2045, but urges the legislature to adopt a shorter time-served requirement of 10, 15, or 20 years, which is what most states with geriatric parole or release currently require. In Wisconsin, for example, people age 60 or older are eligible for release after serving 10 years, and people over 65 are eligible for release after serving five years.

**Why the Bill is Needed:** People “age out” of crime and become significantly less likely to reoffend after age 30, even if their offense was violent. People released after age 55 have recidivism rates in the single digits. Yet Illinois does not have geriatric parole. **HB 2045 will**

- **Alleviate the growth in Illinois's costly aging prison population:** Incarcerating large numbers of elderly people is a high-cost, low-value deal for taxpayers. Because of Illinois's lengthy sentences, almost one in four people in state prisons are age 50 or older. Illinois's elderly prison population is the least likely to reoffend but the most expensive to incarcerate, because of the increased medical needs of aging people in prison. Geriatric parole can safely release people who are low-risk but high-cost.
- **Increase public safety:** Continuing to incarcerate people past the point at which they are a high risk to others wastes taxpayer dollars and prison cells. Releasing those who committed crimes decades ago but pose little risk today allows Illinois to use those resources to solve and prevent crimes happening now instead.
- **Reduce racial disparity:** Blacks are overrepresented in Illinois's prison population and in the population serving lengthy sentences: 66% of people serving life sentences are Black, as are 67% of people with virtual life sentences, and 61% of people with effective sentences of 15-40 years. Geriatric parole directly impacts this population and gives thousands of Black people aging in Illinois prisons because of lengthy sentences a chance to return to their communities.

### How Geriatric Parole Works:

**Hearing before the Prisoner Review Board:** Under HB 2045, people who have served at least 25 consecutive years in prison and are age 55 or older are eligible for *consideration* for geriatric parole. These people will receive a hearing before the Illinois Prisoner Review Board (PRB). During the hearing, the PRB will consider the person's rehabilitation efforts and disciplinary record in prison, housing plans, criminal history, risk of reoffending, and victim input, if any.



**Grant or denial of geriatric parole and reapplication:** The PRB has the sole discretion to grant or deny geriatric parole – it is never guaranteed. If a person is denied geriatric parole, the PRB must explain its reasons for the denial in writing. People denied geriatric parole can be reconsidered after waiting three years.

**Victim notification:** Notice of the geriatric parole hearing must be provided in advance to any victims or victims' families involved in the case. Victims and victims' families shall have the opportunity to participate in the hearing and may participate or not, as they desire.

**Potential impact:** Based on data from the Department of Corrections, a significant number of people are serving extremely lengthy or life sentences in Illinois. Also, many incarcerated people over age 50 have already served at least 20 years, which would make them eligible for geriatric parole consideration within several years of the effective date of HB 2045. As of 2020, in Illinois state prisons there were 1,579 people serving life without the possibility of parole (LWOP); 2,472 people serving virtual life sentences; and 6,069 people with expected lengths of stay of 15-40 years. Of those people in state prisons who are age 50 or older, 60% have been in prison for at least 20 years, and of those 60 and older, 69% have been in prison for at least 20 years.

**Retroactivity: HB 2045 is retroactive** – in other words, it makes people currently in Illinois state prisons eligible for geriatric parole consideration by the Prisoner Review Board when they are age 55 or older and have served at least 25 consecutive years in prison.

*For additional questions about these bills or FAMM, please contact Shaneva McReynolds at [smcreynolds@famm.org](mailto:smcreynolds@famm.org).*