



## **Bill Summary: Medical and Geriatric Parole Reform in Pennsylvania SB 835 (Sen. Sharif Street)**

**The bill:** If passed, SB 835 would create a mechanism for certain ill and/or aging incarcerated people in Pa. state correctional institutions (SCIs) to petition the Pa. Parole Board for release. The bill also requires Pa. Dept. of Corrections staff to help incarcerated people with petitions for release, provide relevant records, notify families of their incarcerated loved one's terminal medical diagnosis, facilitate quick visitation after a terminal diagnosis, and track statistics about medical and geriatric parole and other items for the legislature to review yearly.

**FAMM's position:** FAMM supports this bill. It is similar to federal compassionate release.

**Who it would help:** The **medical** parole provision would help incarcerated people in Pa. SCIs who have a qualifying serious medical issue *and* a weakened ability to function in prison because of it. The **geriatric** parole provision would help incarcerated people in Pa. SCIs who are age 55 or older, *and* have served half of their minimum sentence or 25 years (whichever is less).

**Bill status:** This bill has been introduced by Senator Street.

**What the bill would do:** SB 835<sup>1</sup> would extend parole eligibility to ill and/or aging incarcerated people in Pa. state prisons. If passed, it would allow incarcerated people, attorneys, families, or the Dept. of Corrections to petition the Parole Board for release due to:

1. Medical Necessity – for people who have a substantially diminished ability to function in prison due to a terminal illness, chronic and debilitating condition, serious functional or cognitive impairment, or physical or mental deterioration due to aging. (No time served minimum).
2. Geriatric Criteria – for people who are 55+, *and* have served at least half of their minimum sentences or 25 years (whichever is less), *and* the Board finds that they are not a danger to the public.

Under both medical and geriatric parole, the Parole Board does not *have* to grant parole. The bill also requires the Pa. Dept. of Corrections to notify families and attorneys of terminal diagnoses quickly and allow special visitation. Finally, the bill requires the Pa. Dept. of Corrections to track relevant statistics and report back to the legislature yearly.

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<sup>1</sup> If passed, SB 835 would amend 61 Pa.C.S. § 6144.

