



Legislation Summary:

An Act related to parole

Initial bill number: [S779 /H3121](#) (Bill numbers will change as legislation proceeds.)

Sponsors: Sen. William Brownsberger, Rep. David M. Rogers

This bill expands the parole board to nine with qualifications to include at least three with expertise with psychiatry, psychology, social work, or the treatment of substance use disorder. It also calls for the use of evidence-based guidelines for release and collecting data so the public can have oversight of the process.

Why this is good: Although 97% of all individuals in custody in Massachusetts are released, fewer are being released with supervision, as they are [not being granted parole](#). Our current parole board is releasing few individuals (26-28%), perhaps due to concerns of recidivism. Studies have shown better re-entry results when applicants reduce the number of years served before a first parole hearing and shorten wait times; using risk-assessment tools, not other considerations; having open parole hearings that are fair (with data collected for improving the process); presuming an individual is [ready for parole unless there are reasons showing they are not](#), to motivate those in custody to work for release and rehabilitation.

Bottom Line: An expanded parole board, with expertise on substance abuse and mental health issues and that uses risk assessment tools is more likely to release individuals to supervision. Many of these parolees would likely have more success with appropriate services while they navigate reentering society.