For someone serving a life sentence, it is typical for the parole consideration process to take approximately two years.

**STEP 1**

**PAROLE ELIGIBILITY**
Every person serving life with parole has to serve a minimum amount of time before getting a parole hearing. The exact amount of time depends on the sentence. For a life sentence with no other time, it is 15 years minus any credits earned (“Diminution credits”). Many people with life sentences are serving life plus a term of years, so do not have their first parole hearing until 20+ years have passed. Victims may submit materials to the Maryland Parole Commission (MPC) at any time.

**STEP 2**

**PRE-PAROLE RECORD COLLECTION**
MPC collects records from a variety of sources during the person’s incarceration. Prior to any parole hearing, MPC notifies victims who have requested notification to invite them to participate, meet with MPC, and/or submit additional materials for consideration.

**STEP 3**

**THE PAROLE HEARING WITH TWO COMMISSIONERS**
Individuals go before two Parole Commissioners. No one besides the candidate may attend unless a victim requests to be there. The Commissioners are required by law to consider factors like the crime, institutional record, remorse, victim input, and the person’s home plan. The Commissioners can either permanently refuse parole, deny parole at this time, or request a risk assessment.

**DENIAL / REHEARING**
This is the most common outcome. The candidate is denied parole at this time, but can come back after some time has passed, usually 3-10 years, and repeat the process. Most candidates have several hearings before advancing to a later stage.

**REFERRAL FOR RISK ASSESSMENT**
This means the Parole Commissioners are advancing the person to the next step to be evaluated by a Department of Corrections (DOC) clinician.

**REFUSAL**
The MPC does not plan to consider the person for parole ever again. It essentially converts the sentence to life without parole.
WAITING FOR THE RISK ASSESSMENT
The parole candidate may wait as long as one and a half years for an assessment.

RISK ASSESSMENT: TRANSFER TO PATUXENT INSTITUTION AND ASSESSMENT
Before generating a report, a DOC clinician conducts a risk assessment, reviews all available records, administers various tests, and interviews the candidate over the course of several weeks.

PAROLE COMMISSIONERS REVIEW THE RISK ASSESSMENT
The Parole Commissioners from the hearing receive the risk assessment report and decide whether to recommend release to the full Commission or to deny parole.

FULL PAROLE COMMISSION VOTES WHETHER TO SEND TO THE GOVERNOR (“EN BANC CONSIDERATION”)
Every MPC Commissioner reviews the entire parole file. At their next closed meeting, Commissioners vote (by majority) whether to advance the case to the Governor or deny parole.

“THE GOVERNOR’S DESK”
If the Commissioners vote to grant parole (or commutation), the MPC sends a letter to the Governor’s office, who takes six months or more to make a decision. If the Governor rejects parole, the case is sent back to the two Commissioners who did the hearing to decide how long the person must wait before their next parole hearing.

Calvin McNeill is a survivor of Maryland’s broken parole system. McNeill was sentenced to life with parole for an offense he committed at age 16. During his nearly four-decades-long incarceration, McNeill maintained a nearly perfect disciplinary record, itself a remarkable feat. He was first recommended for release by the Maryland Parole Commission in 2008, but denied by Maryland Governor O’Malley in 2011. Five years later, the MPC again recommended him for release — he was denied, this time by Governor Hogan. Last year, McNeill was denied a third time, again by Governor Hogan, after the MPC unanimously voted for his release. He had a total of seven parole hearings. McNeill lost his wife and his mother and other loved ones while waiting for Governors to grant his release. The only reason McNeill is not still behind prison walls is because he worked with his lawyers to find another path to court and get his sentence reduced. He has been home since July 8, 2020, and working a full-time job in the community since July 13. He continues to advocate to bring access to the second chances Marylanders serving life sentences with parole have earned.

WELCOME HOME!

MEET CALVIN MCNEILL