

April 13, 2020

Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive SE
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

VIA EMAIL

Re: Urgent Parole Consideration Request (Ga. Const. art. IV, § 2, ¶ 2)
Stanley Wayne Godsey, GDC # 1002633320

Dear Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles Members:

The ACLU applauds your recent decision to evaluate certain detainees for immediate release in response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. This action is well warranted, well within the scope of your legal authority, and will save lives. We write to request that you increase the scope of your review to include expedited parole review for all persons over the age of 62 in Georgia Department of Corrections custody.

While we continue to urge this Board to conduct an expedited review of all incarcerated people aged 62 and over, we write today to draw your attention to one such person, Mr. Stanley Wayne Godsey, age 65. We request that the Board exercise its constitutional authority to grant Mr. Godsey parole.

Emerging data shows that older people and people with underlying health conditions are at greatest risk for serious complications and death from COVID-19. Thousands of people age 62 and over in GDC prisons face increased risk of complications or death if they contract COVID-19. Reviewing their files for expedited release on parole will not only protect them, but also others in GDC—including GDC officers—and mitigate strain on GDC staff while also reducing the costly medical interventions that are often necessary when high-risk people develop COVID-19. Although all people in GDC custody over the age of 62 should be included in the Board's review, those who are also disabled are at particular risk of harm.

At age 65, and with underlying chronic health conditions, Mr. Godsey is well into the age of significant risk for serious complications and mortality from COVID-19. In addition to hypertension and diabetes, Mr. Godsey has chronic asthma and pleurisy, both conditions that affect his lungs and heighten his risk of severe illness, complications, or death if he were to contract COVID-19.

Mr. Godsey has been in Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) custody since September 2019. He is currently incarcerated at Riverbend Correctional Facility in Milledgeville, Georgia. In the six months of his

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incarceration, Mr. Godsey has already accrued 6 PIC points, through participation in classes offered at Riverbend. Mr. Godsey's maximum release date is June 9, 2022. Mr. Godsey has no prior criminal history, and while incarcerated, he has sustained his faith by attending church regularly and serving as a mentor to his fellow residents in their Christian dorm. Additionally, Mr. Godsey has a clean disciplinary record with no infractions during his incarceration.

Mr. Godsey has considerable family support, including a home in Virginia with his fiancée, four brothers and sisters, and his adult daughter and son, who would welcome him and support him on release. Mr. Godsey is deeply committed to complying with any supervision requirements upon release. In fact, while released on bond for three years pending trial, Mr. Godsey was compliant with all release conditions, including house arrest, GPS monitoring, and counseling. Mr. Godsey is well-respected in his community, and his 6 grandchildren certainly want their grandfather home safely. If released on parole, Mr. Godsey requests that his supervision be transferred to Virginia, where Mr. Godsey has a home and family to support his reintegration in society.

And, although all people over 62 will suffer unnecessarily if not released, Mr. Godsey will face particular risk of severe, life-threatening complications, illness, or death if he contracts COVID-19. Because GDC has restricted movement in prisons, including limiting transfers except for medical emergencies, his access to the chronic care he requires for his underlying conditions may be inconsistent, further exacerbating his harm and risk of serious illness or death if he contracts COVID-19.

Conclusion

We urge this Board to extend the exercise of its discretion in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect Mr. Godsey and all others like him. Doing so is not only well within the Board's authority, but also the right thing to do to contain the damage the virus is already causing across the state and GDC. COVID-19 is spreading fast, and people over 62 and people with underlying health conditions are at particular risk. If the ACLU can be of help to the Board in any way as it considers its next steps, please let us know.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Zoe Brennan-Krohn
Staff Attorney
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Kosha S. Tucker
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