



Second Chances Successes in 2024

2024 Legislative Victories: Second Chances Laws Enacted

Maine

- [LD 1863](#) requires DOC to track data on grievances filed by incarcerated people about medical or mental health treatment and make that data public; track data on people released under compassionate release; and provide written information to all incarcerated people about the compassionate release process and how it works, as well as publishing that information online.

Michigan

- [SB 599](#) allows more people to get “medically frail” release. Plus it removed a prior requirement that people on medically frail release go to a medical facility, so now people on medically frail release are able to go home.

Oklahoma

- [SB1835](#) allows people to be resentenced if they were a victim of domestic violence and such abuse was a significant contributing factor to the criminal behavior of the defendant.

2024 Court Victories: Decisions Expanding Access to Second Chances

Massachusetts

- In [Commonwealth v. Mattis](#), the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court found life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) sentences to be unconstitutional under the Massachusetts Constitution for people who were 18 to 20 years old at the time of the crime. The Court further held that this applies retroactively, which means that people currently serving LWOP in Massachusetts who were 18 to 20 at the time of the crime will be eligible for parole consideration under the time-frames that apply to people who were under 18 at the time of the crime. Sentences for people who were under 18 at the time of the crime were changed on July 25, 2014, so qualifying individuals sentenced to LWOP prior to that date will be eligible for parole consideration after serving 15 years, while those sentenced after that date will be eligible after serving 20 to 35 years, depending on the specifics of the crime. The decision does not guarantee that they will be released; it



simply provides them the opportunity to go in front of the parole board, show their rehabilitation, and demonstrate that they are ready to safely return to the community.

Rhode Island

- In 2021, Rhode Island passed the Youthful Offender Act, which made everyone serving a non-LWOP sentence for a crime committed prior to their twenty-second birthday eligible for parole review after serving 20 years. This statute is often referred to as “Mario’s Law,” after Mario Monteiro, who helped inspire the law. However, the State argued that the law didn’t actually apply to Monteiro or others like him who are serving more than one sentence. The ACLU of Rhode Island sued, and the Rhode Island Supreme Court rejected the State’s conclusion, ruling that Monteiro and other similarly situated individuals are in fact eligible for parole consideration after serving twenty years. [Read more here.](#)

2024 Clemency/Sentence Commutation Systemic Victories

Multiple governors utilized their executive clemency powers to grant sentence commutations, including to individuals serving life and very long sentences. These two examples are notable because they take a systemic approach to sentence commutations.

Federal

- President Biden [commuted](#) the sentences of nearly 1,500 people on CARES Act home confinement.

New Jersey

- In July, Governor Phil Murphy issued an [executive order](#) creating an advisory board to review petitions for pardons and commutations, specifically expediting the process for people who meet specified criteria for consideration. These categories include people who committed crimes after being victims of domestic violence, sex trafficking, or other forms of sexual abuse, and people with sentences impacted by excessive trial penalties. Governor Murphy granted his first sentence commutations in December.