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STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL DECISION NOTICE

Name: Torres, Carlos

Facility: Otisville CF

NYSID: [REDACTED]

Appeal
Control No.: 09-091-18 B

DIN: 94-A-5302

Appearances: Margarita Botero, Esq.
Cravath, Swain & Moore LLP
825 Eighth Avenue
New York, New York 10019

Decision appealed: August 2018 decision, denying discretionary release and imposing a hold of 12 months.


Board Member(s)
who participated: Crangle, Berliner.

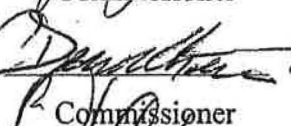
Papers considered: Appellant's Brief received January 18, 2019


Appeals Unit Review: Statement of the Appeals Unit's Findings and Recommendation

Records relied upon: Pre-Sentence Investigation Report, Parole Board Report, Interview Transcript, Parole Board Release Decision Notice (Form 9026), COMPAS instrument, Offender Case Plan.

Final Determination: The undersigned determine that the decision appealed is hereby:

 ☐ Affirmed ☐ Vacated, remanded for de novo interview ☐ Modified to _____
Commissioner

 ☐ Affirmed ☐ Vacated, remanded for de novo interview ☐ Modified to _____
Commissioner

 ☒ Affirmed ☐ Vacated, remanded for de novo interview ☐ Modified to _____
Commissioner

If the Final Determination is at variance with Findings and Recommendation of Appeals Unit, written reasons for the Parole Board's determination must be annexed hereto.

This Final Determination, the related Statement of the Appeals Unit's Findings and the separate findings of the Parole Board, if any, were mailed to the Inmate and the Inmate's Counsel, if any, on 3/22/19 ll.

Distribution: Appeals Unit – Appellant – Appellant's Counsel – Inst. Parole File – Central File
P-2002(B) (11/2018)

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Torres, Carlos

DIN: 94-A-5302

Facility: Otisville CF

AC No.: 09-091-18 B

Findings: (Page 1 of 4)

Appellant challenges the August 2018 determination of the Board, denying release and imposing a 12-month hold.

Appellant raises the following issues in his brief: (1) the Board's decision was arbitrary and capricious and made in violation of applicable legal authority; (2) the Board did not provide sufficient weight to Appellant's rehabilitative efforts, programming, certain COMPAS scores, academic and vocational achievements, and remorse; (3) the Board did not consider Appellant's youth and its attendant circumstances in relationship to the commission of the crime of conviction; (4) the Board's decision was made in violation of Appellant's due process rights; (5) the Board's decision was made in violation of the Eighth Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment; and (6) the panel should have asked additional questions.

As to the first and second issues, discretionary release to parole is not to be granted "merely as a reward for good conduct or efficient performance of duties while confined but after considering if there is a reasonable probability that, if such inmate is released, he will live and remain at liberty without violating the law, **and** that his release is not incompatible with the welfare of society **and** will not so deprecate the seriousness of his crime as to undermine respect for the law." Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) (emphasis added); accord Matter of Hamilton v. New York State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268, 990 N.Y.S.2d 714 (3d Dept. 2014). "Although these standards are no longer repeated in the [Board's] regulation, this in no way modifies the statutory mandate requiring their application." Notice of Adoption, NY Reg, Sept. 27, 2017 at 2. A conclusion that an inmate fails to satisfy **any one** of the considerations set forth in Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) is an independent basis to deny parole. See, e.g., Matter of Silmon v. Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 477, 718 N.Y.S.2d 704, 708 (2000); Matter of Robles v. Fischer, 117 A.D.3d 1558, 1559, 985 N.Y.S.2d 386 (4th Dept. 2014); Matter of Hamilton v. New York State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1268; Matter of Phillips v. Dennison, 41 A.D.3d 17, 21, 834 N.Y.S.2d 121, 124 (1st Dept. 2007).

Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A) requires the Board to consider criteria which is relevant to the specific inmate, including, but not limited to, the inmate's institutional record and criminal behavior. People ex rel. Herbert v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 97 A.D.2d 128, 468 N.Y.S.2d 881 (1st Dept. 1983). While consideration of these factors is mandatory, "the ultimate decision to parole a prisoner is discretionary." Matter of Silmon v. Travis, 95 N.Y.2d 470, 477. Thus, it is well settled that the weight to be accorded the requisite factors is solely within the Board's discretion. See, e.g., Matter of Delacruz v. Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1413, 997 N.Y.S.2d 872 (4th Dept. 2014); Matter of Hamilton, 119 A.D.3d at 1271; Matter of Garcia v. New York State Div. of Parole, 239 A.D.2d 235, 239, 657 N.Y.S.2d 415, 418 (1st Dept. 1997). The Board need not explicitly refer to each factor in its decision, nor give them equal weight. Matter of Betancourt v. Stanford, 148 A.D.3d 1497, 49 N.Y.S.3d 315 (3d Dept. 2017); Matter of LeGeros v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 139

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Torres, Carlos

DIN: 94-A-5302

Facility: Otisville CF

AC No.: 09-091-18 B

Findings: (Page 2 of 4)

A.D.3d 1068, 30 N.Y.S.3d 834 (2d Dept. 2016); Matter of Phillips v. Dennison, 41 A.D.3d 17. In the absence of a convincing demonstration that the Board did not consider the statutory factors, it must be presumed that the Board fulfilled its duty. Matter of Fuchino v. Herbert, 255 A.D.2d 914, 914, 680 N.Y.S.2d 389, 390 (4th Dept. 1998); Matter of McLain v. New York State Div. of Parole, 204 A.D.2d 456, 611 N.Y.S.2d 629 (2d Dept. 1994); Matter of McKee v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 157 A.D.2d 944, 945, 550 N.Y.S.2d 204, 205 (3d Dept. 1990); People ex rel. Herbert, 97 A.D.2d 128.

In 2011, the law was amended to require procedures incorporating risk and needs principles to “assist” the Board in making parole release decisions. Executive Law § 259–c(4); 9 N.Y.C.R.R. §8002.2(a). The Board satisfies this requirement in part by using the COMPAS instrument. Matter of Montane v. Evans, 116 A.D.3d 197, 202, 981 N.Y.S.2d 866, 870 (3d Dept. 2014); see also Matter of Hawthorne v. Stanford, 135 A.D.3d 1036, 1042, 22 N.Y.S.3d 640, 645 (3d Dept. 2016); Matter of LeGeros v. New York State Bd. of Parole, 139 A.D.3d 1068, 30 N.Y.S.3d 834 (2d Dept. 2016); Matter of Robles v. Fischer, 117 A.D.3d 1558, 1559, 985 N.Y.S.2d 386, 387 (4th Dept. 2014). Notably, the 2011 amendments did not eliminate the requirement that the Board conduct a case-by-case review of each inmate by considering the statutory factors including the instant offense. The amendments also did not change the three substantive standards that the Board is required to apply when deciding whether to grant parole. See Executive Law § 259-i(2)(c)(A). Thus, the COMPAS instrument cannot mandate a particular result. Matter of King v. Stanford, 137 A.D.3d 1396, 26 N.Y.S.3d 815 (3d Dept. 2016). Rather, the COMPAS is an additional consideration that the Board must weigh along with the statutory factors for the purposes of deciding whether the three standards are satisfied. See Matter of Rivera v. N.Y. State Div. of Parole, 119 A.D.3d 1107, 1108, 990 N.Y.S.2d 295 (3d Dept. 2014); accord Matter of Dawes v. Annucci, 122 A.D.3d 1059, 994 N.Y.S.2d 747 (3d Dept. 2014); see also Matter of Gonzalvo v. Stanford, 153 A.D.3d 1021, 56 N.Y.S.3d 896 (3d Dept. 2017). Furthermore, declining to afford the COMPAS controlling weight does not violate the 2011 amendments. Matter of King v. Stanford, 137 A.D.3d 1396, 26 N.Y.S.3d 815 (3d Dept. 2016).

Insight and remorse are relevant not only to rehabilitative progress but also to whether release would deprecate the severity of the offense. Matter of Phillips v. Dennison, 41 A.D.3d 17, 23, 834 N.Y.S.2d 121, 125 (1st Dept. 2007). Inasmuch as Appellant disputes the Board’s finding with respect to insight and remorse, it was well within the Board’s authority to make an assessment of Appellant’s credibility (Matter of Siao-Pao v. Dennison, 51 A.D.3d 105, 108, 854 N.Y.S.2d 348, 351 (1st Dept.), aff’d, 11 N.Y.3d 777, 866 N.Y.S.2d 602 (2008)).

As to the third issue, pursuant to the court’s holding in the Hawkins case, for those inmates who are serving a maximum sentence of life imprisonment for a crime committed prior to attaining

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Torres, Carlos

DIN: 94-A-5302

Facility: Otisville CF

AC No.: 09-091-18 B

Findings: (Page 3 of 4)

the age of 18, “the Board must consider youth and its attendant circumstances in relationship to the commission of the crime at issue.” See, Hawkins v. New York State Dep’t of Corr. & Cmty. Supervision, 140 A.D.3d 34 (3d Dept. 2016), affirming in relevant part, 51 Misc. 3d 1218(A) (Sup. Ct., Sullivan Co., 2015). Specifically, in those instances, the Board shall consider: (i) the diminished culpability of youth; and (ii) the growth and maturity of the inmate since the time of commission of the offense. In the instant matter, the Board had before it at the time of the interview all information compiled by the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Appellant’s criminal record, and any family court record of Appellant. The transcript of the interview reveals that the Board discussed and considered Appellant’s age at the time of commission of the Murder 2 offense which carried the Life sentence, the circumstances of the crime, What was happening in his life at that time, his living arrangements, that he came to the U.S. from Puerto Rico to better himself, the judge’s remarks at sentencing, his programming while incarcerated, letters of reasonable assurance, his release plans, disciplinary record, COMPAS instrument, Case Plan, that he was impulsive as a youth, his educational achievements, and other factors. The Board therefore conducted the interview in accordance with the requirements set forth in the Hawkins decision.

As to the fourth issue, an inmate has no Constitutional right to be released on parole before expiration of a valid sentence as a person's liberty interest is extinguished upon conviction. Greenholtz v. Inmates of Nebraska Penal & Correctional Complex, 442 U.S. 1, 99 S. Ct. 2100, 2104 (1979); Matter of Russo v. Bd. of Parole, 50 N.Y.2d 69, 427 N.Y.S.2d 982 (1980); Matter of Vineski v. Travis, 244 A.D.2d 737, 664 N.Y.S.2d 391 (3d Dept. 1997). The New York State parole scheme “holds out no more than a possibility of parole” and thus does not create a protected liberty interest implicating the due process clause. Matter of Russo, 50 N.Y.2d at 75-76, 427 N.Y.S.2d at 985; see also Barna v. Travis, 239 F.3d 169, 171 (2d Cir. 2001); Matter of Freeman v. New York State Div. of Parole, 21 A.D.3d 1174, 800 N.Y.S.2d 797 (3d Dept. 2005).

As to the fifth issue, the denial of parole under a statute invoking discretion in parole determinations does not violate the Eighth Amendment’s prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. Carnes v. Engler, 76 Fed. Appx. 79 (6th Cir. 2003); Lustgarden v. Gunter, 966 F.2d 552, 555 (10th Cir.), cert den. 506 U.S. 1008, 113 S. Ct. 624 (1992), rehearing denied 507 U.S. 955, 113 S. Ct. 1374 (1993); Pacheco v. Pataki, No. 9:07–CV–0850, 2010 WL 3909354, at *3 (N.D.N.Y. Sept. 30, 2010). Appellant’s maximum sentence is life imprisonment. The Board acted within its discretion to hold Appellant for another 12 months, after which he will have the opportunity to reappear before the Board.

As to the sixth issue, Appellant was provided the opportunity to discuss with the Board during the interview any issues of interest, and cannot now be heard to complain that certain issues were not discussed, or the extent to which certain issues were discussed. See Matter of Serna v.

STATE OF NEW YORK – BOARD OF PAROLE

APPEALS UNIT FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATION

Name: Torres, Carlos

DIN: 94-A-5302

Facility: Otisville CF

AC No.: 09-091-18 B

Findings: (Page 4 of 4)

New York State Division of Parole, 279 A.D.2d 684, 719 N.Y.S. 2d 166 (3d Dept. 2001); Matter of Garcia v. New York State Div. of Parole, 239 A.D.2d 235, 657 N.Y.S.2d 415 (1st Dept. 1997).

Recommendation: Affirm.