

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, February 11, 2026 1:00 – 3:00 PM

Legislative Office Building, Room 2B

Meeting Minutes

Members present: Judge David Gold, Commission Chair, Mike Gailor, Judge Joseph Schwartz, Judge Courtney Chaplin, Stephen Tavares, Anna VanCleave, John Santa, Alex Knopp, Jennifer Zaccagnini, Gary Roberge, Bill Dyson, Patrick Griffin, Deborah Del Prete Sullivan, John DelBarba (proxy for John Day), Brittany LaMarr (proxy for Undersecretary Karpowitz), Jessica Waggoner (proxy for Nancy Navarretta), Sarah Karwan (proxy for Ronnell Higgins), Allison Near (proxy for Jen Zito), Natasha Pierre

Commission staff present: Rich Sparaco, Interim Executive Director, Thomas Dowd, Matthew Hono, Jordan Oquendo, Michael Cronin

Guests: Dr. Sukhmani Singh, Fernando Valenzuela, Rachel Mirsky

- I. MEETING CONVENED
 - a. Judge David Gold convened the meeting at 1:06 PM

- II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE 12.10.2025 MEETING
 - a. A motion to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2025, meeting of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission was made by Bill Dyson.
 - i. The motion was seconded by Alex Knopp.
 - ii. The motion carried unanimously through a voice vote.

- III. STUDY ON PUBLIC ACT 15-84 OUTCOMES
 - a. Presentation – Dr. Sukhmani Singh, Assistant Professor, UConn School of Social Work; and Fernando Valenzuela, Researcher, UConn School of Social Work
 - i. Background
 1. In the wake of Miller v. Alabama, many states have banned juvenile life without parole (JLWOP)
 2. Public Act 15-84
 - a. Created a new system of parole eligibility for individuals who:
 - i. Committed a crime while under age 18,
 - ii. Sentenced to more than 10 years in prison, and
 - iii. Incarcerated on or after October 1st, 2015

- b. Emphasis on developmental science and the potential for individuals to age out of crime
 - 3. National research shows low re-conviction rates (Michigan, California, Philadelphia) and cost savings from JLWOP reforms
- ii. Connecticut Findings
 - 1. Methods: 11 qualitative interviews; quantitative analysis using BOPP data
 - 2. Parolee Demographics:
 - a. Average total effective sentence ~30 years
 - b. Most common offenses: murder, manslaughter, felony murder
 - c. Average age at release: 37
 - d. 41% still under DOC supervision; 39% fully discharged
 - e. 74% employed
 - f. Recidivism among juvenile parolees since 2015: 11.4% re-incarceration rate (8.9% excluding absconding)
 - i. 65% overall re-incarceration rate for the state
 - 3. Qualitative Themes
 - a. Early life: trauma, poverty, instability, high suspension rates
 - b. Incarceration: exposure to violence; limited programming due to length of sentence; long-term sentences deprioritized for programming (62% did not participate in any services)
 - c. Turning points & transformations: often tied to family connection and parole opportunity
 - d. Reentry challenges:
 - i. 73% reported difficulty obtaining IDs (Social Security cards, state IDs, birth certificates)
 - ii. Housing barriers; reliance on halfway houses; limited time before discharge
 - iii. 82% secured employment through friends; only one through halfway house
 - 1. Financial instability despite employment
 - iv. Gaps in reentry services; outdated 211 information; relying on word of mouth to find services
- iii. Recommendations Discussed
 - 1. Expand juvenile parole eligibility to under 26
 - 2. Improve pre-release ID procurement
 - 3. Increase investment in prison education and mental health programming, agnostic of sentence length

4. Support family engagement during incarceration
5. Emphasize community investment (housing, education, economic opportunity) to reduce violence

b. Discussion

- i. Judge Gold clarified that the recommendations are not formally included in the report and will not be voted on at this meeting.
- ii. Questions regarding barriers to ID procurement, potential cost savings associated with expanded parole eligibility, and what state agency is ultimately responsible for re-entry
- iii. Judge Gold questioned whether it is more appropriate to compare the recidivism rate of those who serve long-sentences (i.e. 20 years) to the recidivism rate of 15-84 recipients, instead of comparing the recidivism rate of 15-84 recipients to all individuals who serve some period of incarceration
- iv. Bill Dyson stressed his desire to return to the report and associated recommendations at a later date for a more robust discussion

c. Action

- i. Deborah Del Prete Sullivan made a motion to accept the report with commitment to future, more robust discussion of the report's contents at later meeting of the Commission.
 1. Seconded by John Santa
 2. The motion to accept the report carried unanimously through a voice vote.

IV. COMMITTEE UPDATES

a. Mental Health Committee

- i. Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Report
 1. Presentation – Rachel Mirsky, Supervisory Attorney, Disability Rights Connecticut
 2. Methods:
 - a. Review of scholarly literature, jurisdictional reports, and training materials
 - b. Interviews with justice-involved individuals, prosecutors, defense attorneys, public defenders, the private bar, caregivers, and state agencies
 3. Findings
 - a. Connecticut lacks consistent data collection on justice-involved individuals with I/DD
 - b. DOC does not consistently assess or track individuals with I/DD; limited coordination with DDS

- c. Other agencies (DCJ, police, CSSD, defense) may rely on self-report; no standardized collection of I/DD status
 - d. Lack of adequate training amongst practitioners; risk of misdiagnosis or late diagnosis
 - e. Need for improved communication tools
 - f. No standardized tracking of offense patterns; commonly noted charges include theft, domestic violence, and some sex offenses
 - g. Communication gaps across agencies
 - ii. Judge Gold paused the presentation to resume at a later date due to time constraints and remaining agenda items.
- V. 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
- a. Resolution for Increasing/Adding Mental Health Pretrial Beds
 - i. Rich Sparaco presented on a recommendation that arose out of the Commission’s Pretrial Working Group and Criminal Procedure and Sentencing Advisory Committee to support the expansion of pretrial mental health treatment beds for male clients and the creation mental health treatment beds for female clients.
 - ii. Discussion
 - 1. John DelBarba voiced support for the measure and the need for these beds.
 - 2. Anna VanCleave voiced support for the resolution but expressed concerns about potential net-widening effects and urged the Commission to study the effects of any increase in the number of beds available.
 - 3. Alex Knopp suggested actions to explore Medicaid reimbursement to offset residential bed costs.
 - 4. A motion to approve the resolution was made by Bill Dyson
 - a. Alex Knopp seconded the motion.
 - b. The motion was carried unanimously through a voice vote.
- VI. PRESENTATION OF AMENDMENTS TO COMMISSION BYLAWS
- a. Judge Gold discussed the proposed revisions to the Commission’s bylaws and the need to review the bylaws a meeting before they can be voted on to be approved.
 - b. Judge Gold questioned if the requirement for a formal written notice of proxy designation in advance of a meeting, as currently drafted in the bylaws revision, is too arduous.
- VII. UPDATE ON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH PROCESS
- a. Andrew Clark, Director of IMRP, presented an update on the Commission's executive director search.

- i. Andrew Clark outlined that the role received 19 applications, and the review process will begin shortly.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS

- a. Judge Gold highlighted two new report requests that the Commission received from the Connecticut General Assembly's Judiciary Committee.
 - i. A summary of the findings and work of the Commission's Pretrial Working Group.
 - 1. The Commission discussed whether the report needs to be approved by the full Commission before being transferred to Judiciary Committee.
 - 2. There was agreement that working group and Chair approval was sufficient.
 - ii. An exploration into the factors that influence the time it takes for a criminal case to dispose and court processing efficiencies, using data from Connecticut Information Sharing System.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

- a. The meeting adjourned at 3:12 PM.