

# STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
FY 2023**

**80 YEARS, 1943-2023** Enhancing Public Safety in Georgia Through Informed Clemency Decisions





# We are enhancing public safety

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## The Agency is guided by the 4E's

**Engaging** Stakeholders

**Educating** the Community

**Encouraging** Active Participation

**Enhancing** Operations

## OUR MISSION

To serve the citizens of Georgia by exercising the constitutional authority of executive clemency through informed decision-making, thereby ensuring public safety, protecting victims' rights, and providing offenders with opportunities for positive change.

## OUR VISION

To be the nation's most effective and efficient executive clemency authority by:

- Making informed, scientific, data-driven clemency decisions based in constitutional authority and guided by applicable state law
- Preparing offenders for positive change through the imposition of practical and constructive pre and post release conditions
- Protecting the public and creating safer communities by holding accountable those offenders who violate the conditions of release
- Ensuring crime victims have a voice in the post-conviction criminal justice process
- Fostering partnerships and positive relationships with all stakeholders
- Engaging, educating, and encouraging the active participation of all stakeholders in the clemency decision-making process
- Striving to be a continuously learning public safety organization

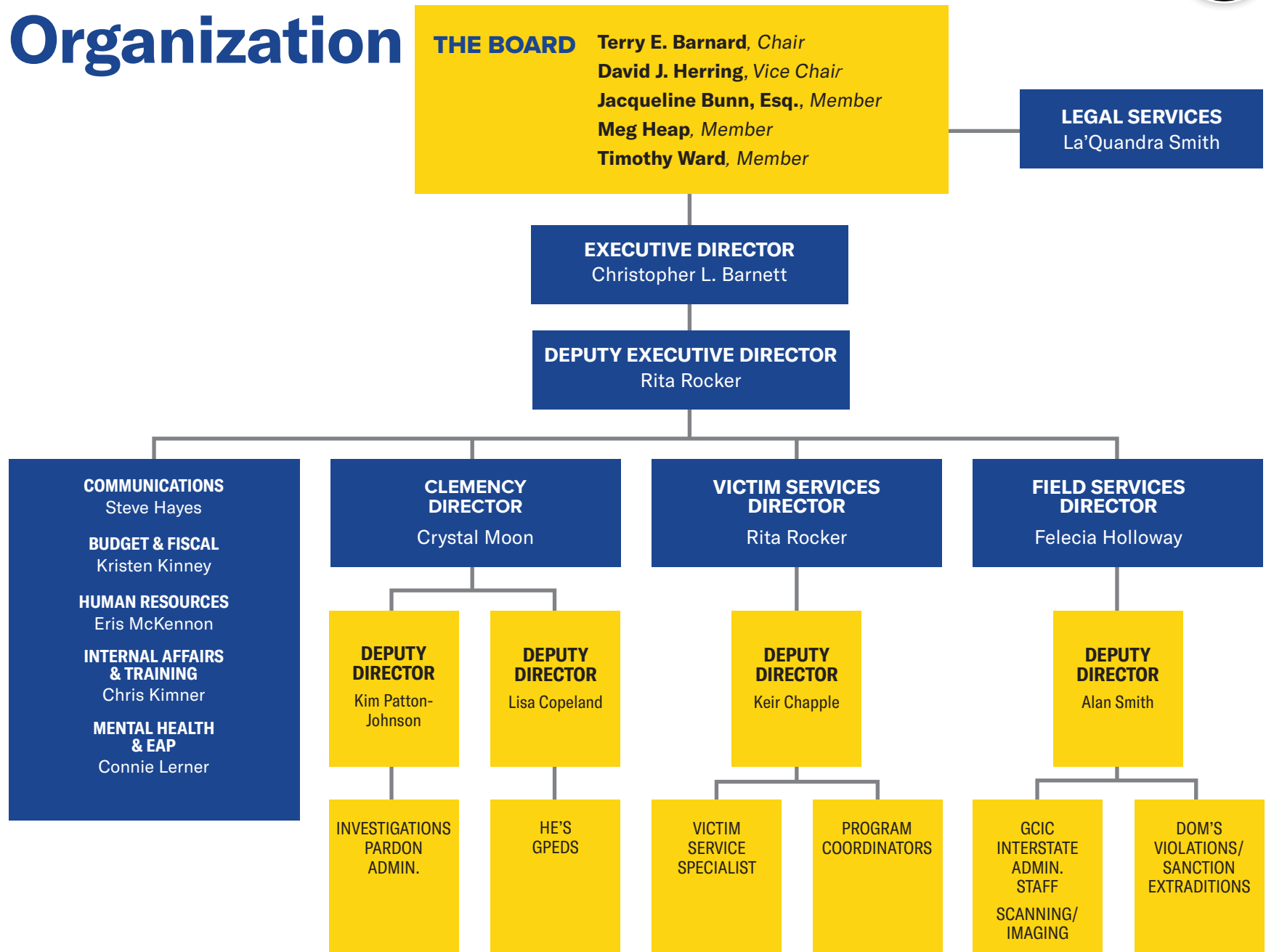
## OUR VALUES

We value Ethics, Integrity, Equity and Innovation.





# Organization



# Highlights from FY 2023

## Parole Board Leadership Elected

At the June 2023 monthly meeting, the State Board of Pardons and Paroles elected a chair and vice chair for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. Terry Barnard was elected to serve as chair for the Georgia Parole Board from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024. David Herring was elected vice chair for FY 2024.

Terry Barnard was first appointed to the Board in 2010 and was appointed again to a new seven-year term in 2017. FY 2024 is Barnard's ninth term as the Board's chair. Terry Barnard is a former state legislator in the Georgia House of Representatives.

David Herring was appointed to the Georgia Parole Board in 2018 and was elected to the leadership role for the first time. Herring is a former state trooper and Lt. Colonel managing security for the Governor's Office, Speaker of the House, Lt. Governor, and Chief Justice.



*"I have had an awesome responsibility and a debt of humility to work for you as your Board Chair. What a team we have, and I'm still honored."*

— Parole Board Chair  
Terry Barnard

*"It's an honor to serve on this board and in this capacity. This board does not make this agency, the staff members make this agency and I truly believe that."*

— Parole Board Vice Chair Elect  
David Herring

## New Parole Board Appointment

In January of 2023, Governor Brian Kemp appointed Timothy C. Ward to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. Ward is the former commissioner of the Georgia Department of Corrections. Ward filled the vacancy on the five-member board as Member Brian Owens' term ended. Governor Kemp had previously appointed Ward as the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Corrections in 2019. Ward's career with the Department of Corrections began in 1992.



*"The Parole Board has an important role in Georgia's criminal justice system. During my tenure as the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Corrections, the agency and the Board worked closely together to serve Georgia communities and keep families safe. I pledge to make informed decisions when determining which eligible offenders are deserving of parole."*

— Parole Board Member Tim Ward





## Victim Impact Sessions Continue to Expand in FY 2023

Crime victims have increased access to Georgia's Parole Board through Victim Impact Sessions (VIS). By collaborating with district attorneys and local victim-witness assistance offices, the Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) and the Parole Board hold meetings with crime victims. Victims and crime survivors meet in person with a Parole Board Member who is assisted by the Board's Clemency and GOVS staff. Victim input collected at the meetings is added to the parole case files. During the fiscal year, Victim Impact Sessions included victims from the following judicial circuits and included a Parole Board Member:

Brunswick and Eastern Judicial Circuits - **Chair Terry Barnard**

Atlanta and Flint Judicial Circuits - **Vice Chair Jacqueline Bunn**

Appalachian, Blue Ridge, Enotah, and Northeastern Judicial Circuits - **Board Member David Herring**

Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit - **Board Member Meg Heap**

Towaliga Judicial Circuit - **Board Member Brian Owens**



### VICTIM IMPACT SESSIONS

## What they said

“As the Board makes clemency decisions, public safety is one prong of that process. Victim impact is another prong. It is imperative that victims' concerns are heard throughout the criminal justice process.”

— Vice Chair Jacqueline Bunn

“Meeting with these victims was significant for many reasons, but especially in that it allowed the victims to have a voice and to be heard. This collaboration with the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles assists the District Attorney's Office in its mission to Seek Justice, Serve Justice, and Do Justice.”

— Appalachian Judicial Circuit  
District Attorney B. Alison Sosebee

“We must never forget that victims are at the center of the criminal justice system, and we must do everything we can to ensure that their voices are heard, and their rights are protected.”

— Parole Board Member David Herring

continued ►

## Agency's Operations - Guided by the 4E's

**Engaging Stakeholders, Educating Communities, Encouraging Active Participation & Enhancing Operations**

In FY 2023, the agency continued to enhance its operations through consistent engagement, education and by encouraging active participation in the parole process. By enhancing the day-to-day operations, the agency is improving public safety. One of the many ways the agency accomplished this in FY23 was through the "Parole 101 Presentation." Clemency, Field Services, and the Georgia Office of Victim Services presented the Board's operations, parole process, parole compliance and victim services. Staff made presentations in FY 2023 to the following: the Atlanta Bar, District 10 of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, the DeKalb County District Attorney's Office, the Georgia Professional Association of Community Supervision and at the Georgia Prison Wardens' Association Conference.

*"To effectively navigate the criminal justice process, attorneys and judges need a keen understanding of the parole board's authority, responsibility, and processes. Attorneys representing offenders and judges sentencing offenders can both provide useful information to the Board to help ensure its decisions contribute to public safety."*

*- Vice Chair Jacqueline Bunn*

*"The information we were able to provide the wardens and prison staff will help them prepare offenders for future successes. The Parole Board, the Department of Corrections, and Department of Community Supervision are working in unison to improve public safety through successful offender outcomes."*

*- Executive Director of Parole Chris Barnett*

## Support for Georgia's Anti-Gang Network

Georgia's Anti-Gang Network led by State Attorney General Chris Carr continued statewide efforts to eliminate criminal gang activity. At each regional network meeting in FY 2023, Georgia Parole Leadership to include Board Members delivered reports describing efforts to eliminate gangs. Attorney General Carr noted the Parole Board has been a great partner in the network. Parole attended regional meetings in Savannah, Columbus, Griffin, Athens, and Cherokee County.

*"Bringing together law enforcement is resulting in stronger communication and can greatly enhance the amount of information we receive on offenders with gang ties. The Board is extremely interested in this information which is a factor when considering an offender's parole. Gang members will find it harder to be paroled in Georgia."*

*- Parole Board Member Meg Heap, Savannah, Georgia*

*"We recognize the importance of the work you do to help bring justice and healing to those affected by the criminal activity of gangs."*

*- Georgia Office of Victim Services Director Rita Rocker, Griffin, Georgia*

*"Being a part of Georgia's Anti-Gang efforts allows the Georgia Parole Board to connect with the officers in the community, share information with the Board, and continue to enhance public safety."*

*- Executive Director of Parole Chris Barnett, Griffin, Georgia*







# Law Enforcement, Offender and Community Engagement

## Law Enforcement Engagement

During the fiscal year, the Parole Board continued annual engagement of its law enforcement partners to include the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, The Georgia Sheriffs' Association, the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia, the Georgia Prison Wardens' Association, the Criminal Data Exchange Board, the Georgia Department of Corrections, the Georgia Department of Community Supervision, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice, and the Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council.

*“These stakeholders are important to parole decision making. They can provide the latest community views regarding offender cases.”*

*– Executive Director of Parole  
Chris Barnett*

## Offender Engagement

In FY 2023, Parole Board Leadership again engaged state inmates, support groups and representatives. By participating in Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) and Department of Community Supervision (DCS) programs the Board received information from this key stakeholder. Board staff including voting Board Members engaged offenders at Lee Arrendale State Prison, Colwell Probation Detention Center, Rutledge State Prison, Metro Reentry Facility, Macon Day Reporting Center (DRC), Gainesville DRC, and Central State Prison, among others.

*“The Parole Board encourages the offender population to excel and become ‘parole ready.’ These graduates are making a statement that they can work and succeed in life. The Board Members view this type of achievement in a positive way.”*

*- Executive Director of Parole  
Chris Barnett*

## Parole Consideration/Clemency Guidelines Revalidation

The revalidation process of the Parole Board's guidelines occurred during FY 2023. Prior to adopting changes to the guidelines in June, Parole Board Leadership engaged several groups allowing stakeholder input. Meetings were held with the Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (GACDL), the Georgia Council of Superior Court Judges and the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia. The revalidation process results in a guidelines system that reflects current community views regarding crimes, sentence length and a parole recommendation that is appropriate to protect the public. Adopted changes included raising the crime severity levels for Criminal Street Gang Activity and Arson 1.

*“By engaging those who represent offenders, as well as prosecutors and judges, a greater community view is achieved as we seek to update the parole guideline system.”*

*- Executive Director of Parole  
Chris Barnett*



## Conference Training and Presentations

To be a continuous learning organization and to facilitate training for local, state, and national organizations, the Georgia Parole Board took part in numerous events in FY 2023.

Prison wardens were engaged at the Georgia Prison Wardens' Association Annual Conference. The engagement included a parole board member panel which discussed how cases are considered for parole and how correctional staff can provide valuable offender information to the Board.

*"The Department of Corrections and the wardens are key partners of the Parole Board. The wardens and counselors are the corrections staff who know the offenders best and their information is important if we are to make informed parole decisions."*

**– Parole Board Chair Terry Barnard**

*"Certainly, as board members, we need to know when an offender is doing well and when they're not. Today's engagement with the wardens will strengthen that necessary relationship which will benefit public safety."*

**– Parole Board Member Meg Heap**

Georgia Parole's Clemency staff presented its new electronic pardon process at the APAI (Association of Paroling Authorities International) and APPA (American of Probation and Parole Association) annual conferences.

*"Our pardon process presentation highlighted the advancements we've made over the past several years including moving to an electronic format which is far more efficient and effective. The result are pardons for deserving offenders who in turn can continue to be productive citizens."*

**– Executive Director of Parole Chris Barnett**

The Georgia Victim Services Delivery Model was presented at the 2022 National Association of Victim Assistance in Corrections (NAVAC) Conference. The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) presented its comprehensive post-conviction role, responsibility, and notifications process.

*"I walked away inspired and motivated by their programs and their people! I would love to see this as a plenary or keynote presentation."*

**– Jaquel Moody, Arizona Department of Corrections**

Georgia Parole Board and Georgia Office of Victim Services' staff also attended the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) 48th Training Conference.

Also in FY 2023, the Georgia Parole Board participated in state conferences to include the Georgia Professional Association of Community Supervision's conferences. A Board Member Panel provided for a discussion between the Board and the Georgia Department of Community Supervision.

*"The professional relationship the Parole Board has with the Department of Community Supervision (DCS) is excellent and maintaining that level of communication and cooperation is very important to public safety."*

**– Parole Board Chair Terry Barnard**

*"Engaging the GPACS members allows the Board to continue working in unison with the Department of Community Supervision and the Department of Corrections. Successful reentry can't be accomplished without this strong partnership."*

**– Executive Director of Parole Chris Barnett**

The Board and Georgia Office of Victim Services also participated in the annual Georgia Commission on Family Violence Conference.





# Letter

## FROM THE CHAIR

To: The Honorable Brian Kemp, Governor,  
Members of the General Assembly, and  
Citizens of the state of Georgia



**I am humbled to again serve as Chair of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles.** I am pleased to present the Fiscal Year 2023 Annual Report as required by O.C.G.A. § 42-9-19.

This is a significant year for the Board in that it was 80-years ago that the agency was created through legislation and a landmark amendment to the State Constitution. As our recognition of this monumental milestone began this year, you will read more about it in the FY 2024 report next year as we mark the event throughout 2023. Nevertheless, it is a significant milestone to record.

For this fiscal year report, I again draw your attention to the agency's consistent public safety approach as it relates to case preparation, consideration and decision making. The scientific, data-driven, informed decision-making process once again has proven to protect the public. The Board's parole success rate has again eclipsed the national average by an estimated 13%. At a seventy (70) plus percentage rate of success, Georgia's parole system ranks among the nation's leaders and remains a model for other states.

An exhaustive effort goes into ensuring public safety is the end-result of our decisions. Our Clemency, Field, and Victim Services divisions continue to provide the Board Members with all relevant and available information regarding cases, whether that is a parole release decision or to determine if an offender has violated the terms of his or her release and based on the information, what action is to follow.

Through the effective leadership of the agency's executive director and the management team, processes are continuously examined. This is vital to an agency if it is to accomplish a public safety mission.

Examining community views, trends and data is necessary. In FY 2023, we updated our parole decision guidelines. One change is reflective of our state's effort to combat gangs as we increased the crime severity level for criminal street gang convictions which will negatively impact parole chances for those participating in these crimes. Again, in FY 2023, we focused on providing more crime victims with access to the Board ensuring the members have victim views and available information before making the parole decision. Please review this report as we describe in more detail how the Georgia Parole Board places our Georgia communities at the center of our decisions while making every effort to balance that against the best decision for a deserving, 'parole ready' offender.

Sincerely,

Terry E. Barnard, Chair  
State Board of Pardons and Paroles

# The Five Member Parole Board



The Georgia Constitution provides that Parole Board Members are to be appointed by the Governor to seven-year staggered terms, subject to confirmation by the State Senate. Board Members are full-time state employees from various professions including criminal justice and private business. In 1943, the Board was established through a constitutional amendment and consisted of three members. In 1973, as the prison population rose to 9,000, the Constitution was amended to increase the Board to five members. Today, with an inmate population at approximately 49,000, the Board still consists of five voting members. The Board is the sole authority in the state to make informed decisions regarding which state inmates should be paroled, thereby ensuring that the state's prison beds are dedicated to the offenders who have committed the most serious crimes.

In Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), through the Board's executive clemency authority, 5,863 offenders were released from prison to serve the remainder of their prison sentence on parole. Georgia's percentage of pa-

rolees successfully completing parole in FY23 was 70%. The national average was estimated to be approximately 57%. The Board's authority includes granting paroles, pardons, and commutations including death sentences. Deciding whether to grant an offender parole is the primary responsibility of the Board. Parole hearings are not held. However, each offender entering the Georgia prison system is interviewed by parole staff. The Board also actively solicits input and accepts pleas for and protests of clemency throughout the consideration process. Information from community stakeholders, including victims, the public and criminal justice partners is considered by the Board. The Board Members have discretion to determine who receives clemency.

The total number of parole eligible offender cases considered by the Board Members during the fiscal year was 17,151. The Board's decision may be for the offender to receive a tentative parole month which is a future possible release from prison, an immediate release or parole may be denied. In most cases, if granted, the offender receives a tentative parole month (TPM) which is a future possible parole release. Please read more about the parole process in the Clemency section of this report.

Board Members are required to make many decisions regarding each parole case. Not only is a majority of three votes required to grant or deny parole, but other votes may also be required for each individual parole case. For example, the Board may add preconditions to parole which require each member to vote. In FY23, the five Board Members made a total of 62,969 votes. Again, the total represents all Board decisions requiring a vote and multiple votes or decisions for each offender case during the fiscal year.

## Guidelines are applied to cases

In most cases, the Board's Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System is applied which includes a time-to-serve recommendation. Board Members review the comprehensive case file of each offender, and each

## FY23

**62,969**  
CLEMENCY VOTES

**17,151**  
INMATE CASES  
CONSIDERED

**70%**  
OF PAROLEES  
SUCCESSFULLY  
COMPLETED PAROLE

**5,863**

OFFENDERS  
RELEASED BY PAROLE  
FROM GEORGIA  
PRISONS IN FY23





member individually makes a parole decision. Although the guidelines are not applied to life sentence reviews, the Board maintains a comprehensive parole file in each case and the members review each case thoroughly before voting to grant or deny parole. The Board's decision process is evidence-based, scientific and data-driven.

## Death Sentences

The review of death sentences is a responsibility of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. The Board is the only entity in Georgia with the constitutional authority to commute a death sentence. The Governor does not have this authority in Georgia. Board Members conduct a clemency meeting for the condemned inmate after which they may commute a death sentence to life with or without the possibility of parole, issue a stay or deny clemency.

## Monthly Board Meetings

The Board conducts monthly Parole Board Meetings at which policy changes are considered and operational updates are provided. Offender cases are not discussed, and parole decisions are not made at the monthly Board Meetings. Learn more about the clemency process beginning on page 19.

# Constitution and History

## Checks and Balances

Georgia's constitution provides for three branches of government to serve as checks and balances on the power of government over the offender. The legislative branch sets the minimum and maximum range of the prison sentence, the judicial branch sentences the offender within that range, and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, as a part of the executive branch, manages the finite resource of state prison beds by considering eligible offenders and making parole grants in the interest of public safety.

## History of Parole in Georgia

Parole came to Georgia in 1908 when the General Assembly voted to give the Prison Commission authority to implement a system of "parole or conditional pardons." Parole could be granted upon the approval of the full Commission and the Governor. The Commission had power to issue warrants and arrest parole violators. In 1938, the Commission was given broad powers to grant paroles without the approval of the Governor and without limitation on its authority, "save the welfare of the State." However, the Commission remained hampered by a shortage of funds. Then in the early 1940s there were significant questions raised about the handling of pardons. The General Assembly passed legislation and it was signed into law in February of 1943, creating the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an independent agency to administer executive clemency. In August of 1943, Georgia voters ratified, by a ratio of four and a half to one, a landmark amendment to the State Constitution establishing the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an independent agency authorized to grant paroles, pardons, reprieves, commute sentences, including death sentences, and remove disabilities imposed by law.





# PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS

## Terry E. Barnard CHAIR



Terry E. Barnard serves as Chair of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles for Fiscal Year 2024. Mr. Barnard is serving a ninth one-year term as Chair. He is the Board's second longest serving chair.

As Parole Board Chair, Mr. Barnard also serves on the Board of Community Supervision. The board has regulatory oversight of the Department of Community Supervision which is responsible for the supervision of felony offenders on probation and parole in Georgia.

Under Mr. Barnard's leadership as Parole Board Chair, enhancements have been made to the parole consideration process. Enhancements include increased notifications to prosecutors and other stakeholders regarding pending Board decisions to solicit additional case information. Access to the Board Members and the decision-making process has increased for victims and the Board continues to revise its Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System to ensure best practices in parole decision-making.

Mr. Barnard, a former State Representative, served nearly sixteen years in the Georgia House of Representatives. The Coastal Georgia lawmaker served as a member of several key House Committees, including the State Institutions and Property Committee, where he served as the Chair for six years. In 1995-1996, Mr. Barnard guided through the Georgia House the framework for the State Sex Offender Registry and Sexual Offender Registration Review Board. Mr. Barnard's legislative experience and knowledge of the Georgia Department of Corrections continues to serve the Board and the citizens of Georgia.

Mr. Barnard is a native of Tattnall County and lives in McIntosh County. He is a graduate of Atlantic Community College and has a strong background in business and more than eighteen years of experience in the financial industry. He is involved in a local Baptist Church and takes part in many community events and activities.





## David J. Herring VICE CHAIR

David J. Herring serves as Vice Chair of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles for FY 2024. As Vice Chair, Mr. Herring also serves on the Board of Community Supervision which has regulatory oversight of the Department of Community Supervision.

Mr. Herring was appointed to the Board on August 1, 2018, by Governor Deal. He joined the Georgia Department of Public Safety in 1994 as a state trooper and has served the state of Georgia for over twenty-eight years. During his tenure with the Department of Public Safety, Mr. Herring served as team security for the University of Georgia Football Program and served as member of the state of Georgia S.W.A.T. Team and prior to his Board appointment, as a Lt. Colonel managing security details for the offices of Governor, Lt. Governor, Speaker of the House and Chief Justice. Mr. Herring received the Governor's Public Safety Award for Heroism in 2001 and was recognized by the Gainesville Kiwanis Club as Trooper of the Year in 2004. He is a member of the 2014 Leadership Georgia Class. Mr. Herring graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1992 with a bachelor's degree in Public Administration. Mr. Herring and his wife reside in Hall County and are members of their local church.





## PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS *CONTINUED*

### Jacqueline Bunn, Esq. BOARD MEMBER

Jacqueline Bunn was appointed to complete an unexpired term on the State Board of Pardons and Paroles in July of 2016, by Governor Deal. She was reappointed to a full seven-year term in December of 2016 and has served two terms as Vice Chair of the Board. In August of 2018, Ms. Bunn received an appointment to the Georgia Commission on Family Violence. The commission works to educate and raise awareness about family violence in Georgia and evaluates the need for additional state services. Ms. Bunn also serves as a member of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, serving as the Chair of the Victims Compensation Board.

Ms. Bunn started her career with the state of Georgia in 1997, as an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Rights Section for the Georgia Department of Law. She handled hundreds of cases involving the Department of Corrections and the State Board of Pardons and Paroles in state and federal courts, from the trial level through the appellate process, to the United

States Supreme Court. From 2006 to 2013, she served as Deputy Director of the Legal Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Public Safety. In July of 2013, Ms. Bunn was appointed by Governor Deal to serve as the Executive Director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). Her extensive experience of Georgia's criminal justice system was a tremendous asset in this role and resulted in numerous government efficiencies and innovations for the agency. Ms. Bunn is a member of the Georgia Bar Association and the New Jersey Bar Association and currently serves on the State Bar of Georgia's Promoting Inclusion in the Profession Committee. In 2019, she received the Georgia Bar's Thomas



R. Burnside, Jr. Excellence in Bar Leadership Award. In FY21, Ms. Bunn received the Marquis Who's Who "Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award." Ms. Bunn is a member of the Georgia Association of Black Women Attorneys (GABWA). In 2021, Ms. Bunn received the GABWA Foundation's Barbara A. Harris Award for Service to the Community. During her presidential year, GABWA received the prestigious President's Cup, the highest award given to a local bar association by the State Bar. Ms. Bunn is also a member of the Henry Toll Fellowship Program Class of 2016.

Ms. Bunn is a native Georgian. She completed both her undergraduate degree in broadcast journalism, with general honors, and her law degree on full academic scholarships from the University of Georgia. She is licensed to practice law in all state and federal courts in Georgia and New Jersey. She has worked in private law firms in Atlanta, Georgia, Westfield, New Jersey, and Princeton, New Jersey.





## Meg Heap BOARD MEMBER

Meg Heap was appointed to the Parole Board by Governor Brian Kemp in January of 2021. Mrs. Heap is the former District Attorney for Georgia's Eastern Judicial Circuit. Mrs. Heap began her career as a volunteer coordinator and victim advocate with the Victim-Witness Assistance Program in the Savannah District Attorney's Office. The position ignited a lifelong passion of working with crime victims and senior citizens. After graduating from law school, Mrs. Heap went on to serve the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit as an assistant district attorney where she prosecuted felonies in Superior and Juvenile Court and handled civil condemnation.

In 1995, Mrs. Heap began work as an assistant district attorney in Chatham County handling State Court Division misdemeanor cases, moving to Superior Court and felony cases in 1997. At the end of 2005, she was assigned to elder and disabled adult abuse cases, becoming the first such prosecutor in the state. She served as chief assistant district attorney from 2009 to the fall of 2010 before briefly leaving the office for private practice. In 2012, Mrs. Heap was elected district attorney for the Eastern Judicial Circuit (Chatham County) where she served two terms. Mrs. Heap is the

immediate past president of the District Attorneys' Association of Georgia and was named the 2019 District Attorney of the Year. She serves on the Georgia State Bar Code Revision Commission and is a past member of the Georgia State Judicial Nominating Commission. She previously served on the Executive Committee for Duffie Stone, the 2019-2020 President of the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA) and served as the Chair of the Best Practices Committee for the NDAA.

Meg Heap is from Savannah and is a graduate of St. Vincent's Academy. She graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Georgia Southern University and obtained her Juris Doctorate from Mercer University.





## PAROLE BOARD MEMBERS *CONTINUED*

### Timothy Ward BOARD MEMBER

Tim Ward was appointed to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles on January 1, 2023, by Governor Brian Kemp.

Ward is the former Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Corrections. Ward was appointed by Governor Brian Kemp as the Commissioner for the Georgia Department of Corrections in 2019. Ward began his career with the Department of Corrections in 1992 at Scott State Prison as a correctional officer and eventually was promoted to Chief of Staff in 2016.

Ward serves on the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council and is one of 28 Commissioners nationally on the American Correctional Association for the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections. He is an active member of the Southern States Correctional Association (SSCA), the Georgia Professional Association of Community Supervision, the American Correctional Association, and the Georgia Prison Wardens' Association. Ward has received the SSCA's P.C. Shields Award. He holds a bachelor's in Criminal Justice from Savannah State University and a master's in Public Administration from Columbus State University.







# EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

## Christopher Barnett

Executive Director of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles



Executive Director Christopher Barnett was appointed to the position in August of 2015 after serving as Interim Director and guiding the Board through a significant reorganization as parole supervision transitioned to the new Department of Community Supervision. Director Barnett's focus remains on strengthening professional relationships with community stakeholders and criminal justice partners and he continues to inform Georgians about the parole consideration process. Director Barnett joined the Georgia Parole Board in 2003 as a parole officer in the Marietta Parole District. Promotions to senior parole officer, assistant chief parole officer, field operations officer, senior field operations officer and statewide program manager followed. In May of 2013, he was promoted to regional director, supervising all operations and parole districts within the Northeast Region. Mr. Barnett is a native of Hinesville, Georgia. He has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a Master of Public Administration from Georgia Southern University.



## Rita Rocker

Deputy Executive Director  
Director, Georgia Office of Victim Services



Rita Rocker was appointed Deputy Executive Director on June 1, 2015. She has served as the Director of the Georgia Office of Victim Services since September of 2020. Ms. Rocker began her career in 1989 as an accounting clerk with the Engineering Unit of the Georgia Department of Corrections. She then worked in the Food & Farm Unit, before being promoted to unit manager of the Property/Inventory & Audits Unit. In 1997, Ms. Rocker transferred to the State Board of Pardons and Paroles as an operations auditor with responsibilities to examine each of the Board's primary operations identifying areas for improvement. Her success resulted in a promotion to unit manager. In 2010, she was promoted to Director of Government Relations, leading the Board through several legislative cycles as criminal justice reforms were implemented in Georgia. Ms. Rocker graduated from Georgia Southern University with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance. She later attended the Georgia Law Enforcement Command College at Columbus State University earning a Master of Public Administration.



# Letter

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles is an agency that I am deeply proud to serve and committed to ensuring public safety is where we start and end each day!** From 2015, when I accepted this role, I have been and continue to be passionate about serving the people of Georgia in this manner.

As a part of our day-to-day operations, we are continuously examining those processes that are making this agency successful. We have dedicated leadership and staff who understand there is always room for improvement and public safety does not rest on past or existing practices. As I've described in these pages before, it is important to engage stakeholders and our criminal justice partners. The agency does not operate in a silo. We have only proven to be successful in our mission by accomplishing our "4E's": **Engaging** Stakeholders, **Educating** Communities, **Encouraging** Active Participation in the process and working continuously to **Enhance** Operations. Everyone is a stakeholder in the decisions made by the Georgia Parole Board.

We are listening. We are collecting information and we are collaborating with stakeholders and our partners to ensure we

are all working toward the common goal of public safety.

In FY 2023, the Board actively took part in law enforcement activities and efforts to include the Georgia Anti-Gang Network. We attended and provided information in each of the network's regional meetings conducted during the fiscal year. We also listened during these meetings as this collaboration is becoming more effective in keeping all law enforcement informed. While we are educating stakeholders and the public, this effort helps us as we receive input, and we are also encouraging all stakeholders to be involved which will result in a fully informed parole board. Again, during the fiscal year, we maintained close contact with Georgia police, our sheriffs and federal law enforcement.

The Georgia Office of Victim Services continues to be the best among victim service providers nationwide. Victim Impact Sessions have been increased whereas victims meet directly with a parole board member. The office's victim-centered approach was apparent all year long with significant events and outreach that you can read more about in this report in the following pages.

Of course, the parole eligible offender is why we exist. If the Parole Board is to be fully informed, we must engage, educate, and encourage this population. Again, we did so in FY 2023 with visits and speaking roles at various facilities operated by the Georgia



Department of Corrections. Information directly from the offender is essential to the best parole decision.

Our operations staff knows that we are only as successful as our day-to-day approaches and processes. That's why we again contacted, met with, and participated in activities to include training events in Georgia and nationally. We maintain that we are the Number 1 Paroling Authority in the Nation. We understand that the reputation is built on our engagement with all stakeholders, partners, and respected best practice experts both locally and nationally.

Sincerely,

Christopher L. Barnett, Executive Director





# Clemency/Parole Consideration

## Clemency / Parole Consideration / FY 2023

In Georgia, clemency encompasses the parole decision making process. Clemency also pertains to the granting or denying of pardons and restoration of civil and political rights by the Parole Board. In Georgia, the Parole Board holds the sole constitutional authority to grant executive clemency to a condemned inmate. An inmate is not entitled to parole, however by law; most are eligible for consideration and therefore must be considered by the Parole Board. As a result of data driven parole decisions, Georgia's scientific parole consideration process keeps the public safe and assists the Department of Corrections in keeping the finite number of prison beds dedicated for the most serious offenders. The annual estimated cost avoidance to the state, due to offenders being under parole supervision as opposed to housing them in a state prison, was more than 319 million dollars for FY23.

## Parole Consideration and Decisions

Parole Board Members independently reach their decisions after reviewing a comprehensive electronic case file on the eligible offender. The file includes investigative reports, reports from the Department of Corrections, the offender's criminal history, circumstances of current offenses, information from the district attorney, victims, and other stakeholders. The Clemency Division provides a thorough assessment and a recommended number of months-to-serve based upon the application of the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System, if applicable. (Information contained in the parole case file can be found on page 20 of this report.) Eligible inmates are automatically

## FY19-FY23 PAROLE RELEASES



**Parole releases decreased during FY23, as prison admissions increased.** During FY23, the Parole Board released 5,863 offenders from prison. This total represented 382 fewer parole board-initiated releases from the previous fiscal year.

considered for parole. Three of the five board members must agree on a decision. In FY23, there were 21,974 offender files initiated for consideration by the Clemency Division. For more information about parole eligibility and the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System visit: [www.pap.georgia.gov](http://www.pap.georgia.gov).

## GPEDS Electronic Case Management

The process of preparing a case for consideration by the Board is completed electronically in GPEDS (Georgia Parole Evidence-based Data System). GPEDS is effective and efficient allowing Board Members to access the offender's case material and make clemency decisions electronically. The Parole Board has eliminated the production of paper files and continues imaging remaining paper files.

The agency has completed the process of

submitting life-sentenced inmate cases to the Board electronically. By eliminating paper files on these cases and submitting them electronically, the Clemency Division's process is more efficient. Now all parole eligible inmate cases in Georgia may be voted electronically by the Board. GPEDS has significantly improved the agency's business processes. The electronic case file is established in GPEDS after the sentence package is electronically received from the Department of Corrections. Electronic notifications trigger actions moving the case toward a Board decision. GPEDS generates notifications to judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement regarding clemency actions pending on parole eligible offender cases. Notifications are also generated to wardens and inmates regarding Board decisions. For FY23, 41,269 notifications (all types) were generated by GPEDS. Please see additional information regarding statutory and other notifications made by the Board later in this report. There were 3,986 preconditions to parole imposed by the Board on inmates during the fiscal year.

## The Parole Consideration Process

After the agency receives an offender's sentencing information electronically from the Department of Corrections, parole investigators collect details of conviction offenses, interview inmates for personal history statements and complete post sentence investigations. For cases requiring a Tentative Parole Month (TPM) decision, what is referred to as a guidelines case, hearing examiners review the information contained in the investigations conducted by parole investigators. To make equitable recommendations to the Board Members, hearing examiners process and prepare rating summa-

ries utilizing the agency's Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System. Following the hearing examiner's review, the cases and recommendations are electronically forwarded to the Board Members for consideration. Board Members then individually consider each case and vote electronically. The members may agree with the time-to-serve recommendation provided by the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System, or they may deviate from the recommendation by increasing or decreasing the number of months to be served before parole is granted. The Board also has the authority to deny parole.

## Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System

When considering parole for those offenders who will become statutorily eligible for parole consideration and who are serving less than a life sentence, the Board reviews a recommendation of months, or a percentage of the sentence to serve. This recommendation is obtained from the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System or the guidelines. The guidelines account for the severity of the crime and the offender's risk to reoffend. The offender's risk to reoffend is determined by weighted factors concerning the offender's criminal and social history that the Board has found to have value in predicting the probability of further criminal behavior.

Changes to the guidelines were approved by the Parole Board during the fiscal year taking effect July 1, 2023.

The Board changed the crime severity level for the offenses of criminal street gang activity and arson 1. The offense of criminal street gang activity was raised from a level five to level eight. Arson 1 was changed from a level five to a level six. The Board also amended the weights of the risk factors for male and female offenders and added a factor regarding females.

The higher the crime severity level, the more serious the offense, and the more likely it will be recommended that the offender serve a longer period prior to parole. More information regarding the Board's application of the current Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System can be found at <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/parole-consideration-eligibility-guidelines>.

## What Information Is Considered When Determining Who Gets Paroled?

### What information is considered when determining who gets paroled?

In a guidelines case, the recommendation is derived from application of the Parole Decision Guidelines Rating System regarding the time the offender should serve prior to parole or if the offender should be denied parole and serve the entire prison sentence. The Board considers the recommendation and decides whether to agree. Because the Board has constitutional authority and discretion to determine parole, the following is information that may be in the parole file that the Board Members can consider when determining if an eligible inmate receives parole:

- ▶ aggravating circumstances
- ▶ victim impact statements
- ▶ prosecutor/judicial statements
- ▶ legal investigations including details and circumstances of the crime(s)
- ▶ the parole guidelines recommendation, if applicable
- ▶ inmate progress reports
- ▶ inmate interviews
- ▶ program completions/failures
- ▶ prison conduct
- ▶ inmate disciplinary reports

- ▶ amount of the prison sentence served
- ▶ inmate's mental health status and progress
- ▶ if probation is to be served after confinement
- ▶ offender's age at the crime commit date
- ▶ prior parole considerations
- ▶ number of prior arrests
- ▶ number of prior felonies
- ▶ prior revocations
- ▶ prior incarcerations
- ▶ personal history statement
- ▶ parole release plan

**Many documents in the parole file on the offender are public.** They may include (if applicable to the offender) but are not limited to:

- ▶ sentencing documents
- ▶ notifications to the offender regarding the Board's decision
- ▶ notice of consideration for parole prior to serving one-third of the sentence (only if applicable)
- ▶ notice of the final decision to parole
- ▶ correspondence sent by the Board in response to an offender's correspondence or in response to correspondence sent on behalf of the offender
- ▶ parole certificate
- ▶ notice of the preliminary revocation hearing
- ▶ the preliminary hearing summary
- ▶ the waiver of the preliminary

- ▶ revocation hearing
- ▶ notice of the final revocation hearing
- ▶ the waiver of the final revocation hearing
- ▶ revocation orders
- ▶ the public portion of the revocation hearing recording
- ▶ court production orders
- ▶ detainers
- ▶ subpoenas
- ▶ Board arrest warrants
- ▶ the certificate of discharge from parole
- ▶ the pardon order
- ▶ restoration of political and civil rights order
- ▶ commutation order
- ▶ Board orders in death penalty cases

**Documents protected by Georgia law from public disclosure include but are not limited to:**

- ▶ victim correspondence
- ▶ the offender's medical information
- ▶ GCIC/NCIC reports
- ▶ the hearing examiner's executive summary of the offender's case
- ▶ the Board ballot
- ▶ the offender's residence plan verification
- ▶ correspondence to the Board including from those opposing parole for the offender
- ▶ parole investigations
- ▶ pardon application
- ▶ petition for commutation of a death sentence



## Tentative Parole Months (excludes inmates serving life with parole eligibility)

After receiving the case from the hearing examiner, a Tentative Parole Month (TPM) is set when three of the five board members agree on a specific amount of time that the offender should serve before being granted parole. Inmates receive written notification of the Board's decision. The Tentative Parole Month or "tentative grant" can be rescinded at any time. The TPM is not a release date or a final parole release decision. An inmate's TPM status is available on the agency's website. The Inmate TPM Lookup (Offender/Inmate Parole Status) link is located on the home page at [www.pap.georgia.gov](http://www.pap.georgia.gov).



### FY19-FY23

#### PICs AWARDED

FY19	37,012
FY20	39,374
FY21	36,257
FY22	30,313
FY23	26,855

## Georgia Department of Corrections' Performance Incentive Credit (PIC) Program

The Georgia Department of Corrections operates an inmate Performance Incentive Credit (PIC) program. By completing rehabilitative programming while incarcerated, state inmates can work toward an earlier possible parole release. The Parole Board determines which

parole eligible inmates who have earned PIC may be allowed an earlier release on parole. The PIC program prepares offenders for success after release and assists the state in better utilization of prison beds at a cost savings to taxpayers. Inmates deemed eligible by the Department of Corrections for the PIC program may have their TPM (Tentative Parole Month) advanced a few months by completing educational, vocational, treatment programs and work details during their incarceration. The Parole Board Members have discretion to determine if an inmate who has earned PIC through program completions will have his/her established TPM moved to an earlier date. If the Board grants earned PIC to an inmate, the TPM is updated and the process toward a final release decision continues. In FY23, the Parole

Board members granted 26,855 PIC or PIC points to state inmates who had earned them by completing specific programming and work details. Each PIC point equals one month that a TPM can be changed to an earlier date.

## Final Review Process

As the TPM approaches, the hearing examiner will conduct a final review of the offender's case file. The final review determines if there is any reason a release date should not be set. Parole could be delayed or denied because of the offender not completing required programming, prison misconduct, or because of detainers, warrants or new sentences. A release date that is set can be rescinded at any time prior to the release.



## Statutory and Board Notifications

The parole consideration process in Georgia allows for correspondence about the case to be sent to the Board at any time during the offender's incarceration up to the point of a parole release. The Board solicits information by sending notifications throughout the process to stakeholders including victims, judges, and prosecutors. Registered victims of a crime are given notification at the time the Board is considering a parole release, allowing for a period for the victim to send the Board information about the case. (O.C.G.A. § 17-17-13) Registered crime victims may also use an automated system to call and receive an offender status update. (Review GA-V.I.P. at <https://pap.georgia.gov/victim-information-program-vip>)

The state's prosecutors routinely provide information to the Board regarding cases. During the post-sentence investigation conducted by parole investigators, the judge and the district attorney can provide information and their

view of the case.

To ensure the Board has current information about cases, the Board sends a notification to judges and district attorneys six months prior to specific offenders becoming parole eligible. This notification is sent regarding "serious felony" cases. The Board sends the "second solicitation/notification" to the judge and district attorney informing them that the Board is preparing the case for statutory parole consideration and is requesting information about the case. In FY23, 2,186 of these case notifications or second solicitations/notifications were sent to judges and prosecutors. These notifications are sent regarding offenders convicted of serious felonies. The offenses included in this notification process can be found at <https://pap.georgia.gov/parole-consideration/parole-process-georgia>.

As a result of legislation enacted in 2017, the Parole Board notifies the district attorney if an offender convicted of a serious violent felony

is being considered for parole release. The notification is made at a minimum of 90-days prior to the final decision to parole. Those serious violent felonies are murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sodomy, and aggravated sexual battery. The Board, according to the statute, also gives the offender being considered an opportunity to submit information. The additional notification allows for another opportunity for the Parole Board Members to receive additional information or current community views regarding the possible parole for the offender. In FY23, the Board sent 90-day notifications in 156 cases. (O.C.G.A. § 17-10-6.1) & (O.C.G.A. § 42-9-43(c) (1))

Judges, district attorneys, sheriffs (of the county of residence prior to the arrest and the county of conviction) and registered victims also receive a 72-hour statutory notification that the offender is about to be paroled. The Board may receive information about the case







during this period. (O.C.G.A. § 42-9-47)

The Clemency Division, in addition, sends the 72-hour notification in “serious violent felony” cases to the district attorney and sheriff of the county where the offender is being released to, if different from the county of conviction.

If released on parole, parole certificates are forwarded to the clerks of court for each docket the inmate received parole.

### Life Sentence Parole Considerations for inmates who are parole eligible according to state law

Inmates serving a life sentence are considered when they become eligible under Georgia law (see State Law and Life Sentences). Unlike other offenders, the Board’s guidelines are not applied and a TPM is not the result of the Board’s decision. The Board’s decision is either to grant or deny parole. If parole is denied to an inmate serving life, the Board, by policy, will reconsider the case again at least once every eight years. The duration between considerations is a decision made by the Board. Inmates serving life who have been denied parole and have a scheduled reconsideration date may receive expedited parole reviews if the Board receives new information that warrants an earlier review. A parole eligible inmate serving a life sentence who receives a “grant” parole decision may be required to complete a Department of Corrections’ work release program as a precondition to parole.

#### State Law and Life Sentences

Since 1995, there have been two statutory changes pertaining to serious violent felonies that determine the minimum amount of the sentence to be served to become parole eligible for offenders sentenced to life with parole eligibility. If a crime considered to be a “seven

deadly sins” offense was committed prior to 1995, the offender is eligible after seven years. Beginning in 1995, offenders committing these crimes became eligible after serving 14 years. If the crime is committed on/after July 1, 2006, the offender is eligible for parole after serving 30 years.

### Pardon Administration Unit

The Parole Board’s pardon application and decision-making process includes thorough pardon investigations and provides the most comprehensive information available to assist the Board in making quality pardon decisions. A pardon does not expunge, remove, or erase



### FY 2023 Parole Decisions for Parole Eligible Inmates Serving Life Sentences for a Serious Violent Felony

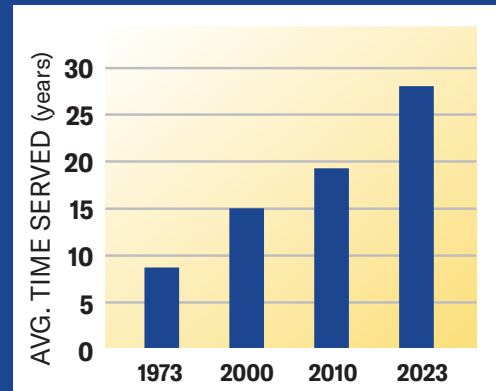
Lifers serving for a Serious Violent Felony - Granted/Released in FY23

83

Total Lifers Considered for parole in FY23 -

2,254

### Life Sentence Time Served for Serious Violent Felonies – Parole Eligible Offenders



In 1973, life-sentenced inmates convicted of serious violent felonies served less than nine years in prison, on average, before being released from prison. By the year 2000, the average had increased to more than 15 years. By 2010, the average time served on a life sentence prior to a release was nearly 20 years and in FY 2023, the average time served was 28 years.

## Pardons Granted FY23

Applications received (all types – pardons and RR)	<b>1,059</b>
Pardons granted without firearms being restored	<b>184</b>
Pardons granted with firearms being restored	<b>285</b>
Restorations of civil and political rights	<b>85</b>
Restorations of civil and political rights with firearms restored	<b>10</b>
<b>Total applications granted</b> (including applications filed in previous year)	<b>564</b>

crimes from a person's criminal record. A pardon is an order of official forgiveness and may be granted to individuals who have maintained a good reputation in their community and have remained crime free for a required period of years following the completion of their sentence(s), to include parole or probation.

The pardon process is continuously reviewed to ensure informed decisions are the result. The current application requires applicants to provide information including their version of criminal offenses, justification for why they should be considered for a pardon, including a description of how they have contributed to their community. Applicants seeking a pardon for offenses requiring registration on Georgia's Sex Offender Registry must be crime free for ten years following the completion of all sentences, as opposed to five years for all other conviction types. As a part of the application process, these applicants must also provide a current copy of their most recent risk level evaluation as assigned by the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board (SORRB), provide



a psychosexual evaluation, and submit to a disclosure polygraph.

A state law adopted in 2015 created a notification process informing registered victims and prosecutors, in specific cases, when an offender is seeking a pardon. This allows victims and prosecutors the opportunity to send the Board information about the case. The Parole Board exceeds the statutory requirements and sends these notifications regarding all applications received. During FY23, the Parole Board sent 697 notifications to district attorneys regarding ex-offenders applying for pardons.

In FY23, 1,059 pardon and restoration of rights applications were received and 564 were granted (all types). There were 19 more applications granted during the fiscal year compared to the previous year.

### Clemency (Parole and Criminal) Investigators

Parole investigators conduct and complete investigations collecting information about the

offender's conviction offenses. The process includes interviewing inmates for personal history statements and completing post sentence investigations. Fifty-nine (59) investigators work in the Clemency Division. Thirty-eight (38) investigators are assigned to the field and predominantly complete post sentence investigations and profiles for all offenders sentenced by Georgia courts. Ten (10) investigators are assigned to work within the prisons to conduct personal history statements on inmates during the diagnostic process at which time they will interview inmates.

The Board has eleven (11) P.O.S.T. (Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council) certified criminal investigators who conduct face-to-face interviews of inmates serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole and these investigators interview all former offenders who are applying for restoration of civil and political rights, a pardon, or a pardon with firearm restoration. These investigators utilize their experience and interviewing techniques





## THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS UNIT'S RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- 1** Managing the operational plan for the Clemency Division's intelligence functions, including the mission, goals, and objectives, as a guide to submitting cases to the Board.
- 2** Researching and analyzing data to develop forecasts, estimates and models to support recommendations.
- 3** Developing and coordinating proficiency training and audits in the various units within the Clemency Division to maintain effective and efficient operations.

to collect necessary information required by the Board Members to make decisions in these cases. In FY23, the clemency investigators completed 34,568 investigations for the Parole Board.

### Critical Analysis Unit

The mission of the Critical Analysis Unit (CAU) is to investigate, prepare and submit specialized parole eligible cases to the Board for consideration and to support the operations of the Clemency Division through comprehensive audits, analysis and continuous training and development.

Analyzing, understanding, and providing information to the Board regarding crime trends and criminal behaviors is important to the Board to make an informed decision regard-

ing a release. CAU personnel are on call 24-hours a day, seven days a week, assisting the Clemency Division with operations and responses to critical incidents and major investigations involving parole eligible offenders housed in the Georgia Department of Corrections. This unit collaborates with the Georgia Department of Corrections regarding Security Threat Groups (STG), gang offenders, offenders with Immigration and Customs detainers and those offenders who are classified with medical requirements in order to provide Parole Board Members with critical case information prior to the parole decision.

The Clemency Division is tasked with preparing cases for the Board to consider. The first step in processing cases for consideration is referred to as initializing the case. This includes reviewing the sentencing package for completeness, determining consideration type, and requesting legal investigations. In FY23, 21,974 cases were initialized.

In FY23, the Board considered 17,151 cases for releases or future tentative parole months.

- 2,254 life sentenced cases
- 10,436 guideline cases
- 4,461 short sentence cases

CAU hearing examiners are tasked monthly to monitor final reviews. In FY23, 8,401 final reviews were completed. CAU randomly audits cases to ensure accuracy before submitting the cases to the Board. For FY23, audits revealed the following:

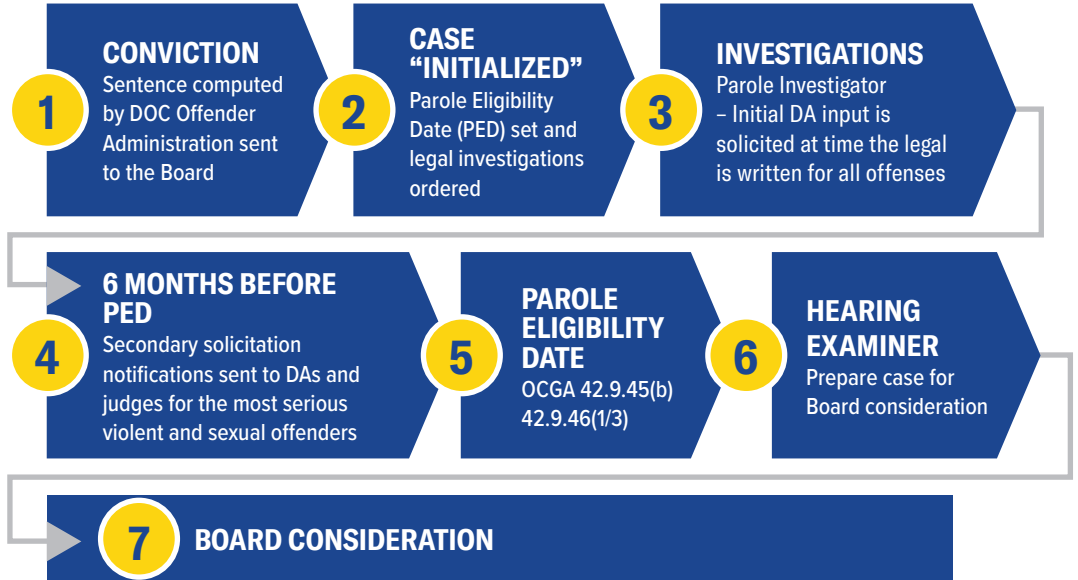
- 99.3% Accuracy in rating on Risk Levels
- 99% Accuracy in rating on CSL (crime severity levels)
- 10 cases were required to be resubmitted to the Board following CAU audits.

## FY23 CLEMENCY ACTIONS

Parole Certificates	<b>3,897</b>
Out-of-State Parole Orders	<b>226</b>
Conditional Transfers	<b>740</b>
Out-of-State Conditional Transfers	<b>144</b>
Supervised Reprieves	<b>371</b>
Out-of-State Supervised Reprieves	<b>0</b>
Commutations	<b>450</b>
Medical Reprieves	<b>16</b>
Out-of-State ICE Orders	<b>19</b>
Total Prison Releases by Parole	<b>5,863</b>
Total Discharges from Parole	<b>5,276</b>
Total Guidelines Decisions	<b>10,436</b>
Life Sentence Cases Denied	<b>2,144</b>
Life Sentence Cases Granted (Total includes the 83 SVF life sentence cases)	<b>110</b>
Total Life Sentence Case Decisions	<b>2,254</b>
Restoration of Civil and Political Rights Granted	<b>95</b>
Pardon Grants	<b>469</b>
Total Pardons & Restorations Granted	<b>564</b>



## PAROLE PROCESS PRE-DECISION



## PAROLE PROCESS POST-DECISION







# Field Services Division

The mission of the Field Services Division is to effectively and efficiently manage the processes related to Parole Violations, Commutations, and the Interstate Compact. The Field Services Division ensures that violations of parole conditions by offenders are quickly addressed. If necessary, the offender's parole is revoked, and the offender is returned to prison. In addition, if a parolee meets specific requirements, a request for commutation can be submitted to the Board. The district operations managers facilitate the revocation, commutation, and Interstate Compact processes for the Board. The Field Services Division comprises four units: the Scanning and Imaging Unit, the Warrant/GCIC Entry Unit, the Violations/Commutations Unit, and the Interstate Compact Unit.

## FY23 Parole Population

During Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23), the population of offenders on parole under community supervision decreased from 17,744 on July 1, 2022, to 16,369 on June 30, 2023. The num-

ber of offenders discharged from parole was 5,276. The percentage of successful parole completion was 70% for the fiscal year. The cumulative number of offenders under parole supervision during the fiscal year was 23,639. Offenders released on parole are supervised by the Georgia Department of Community Supervision.

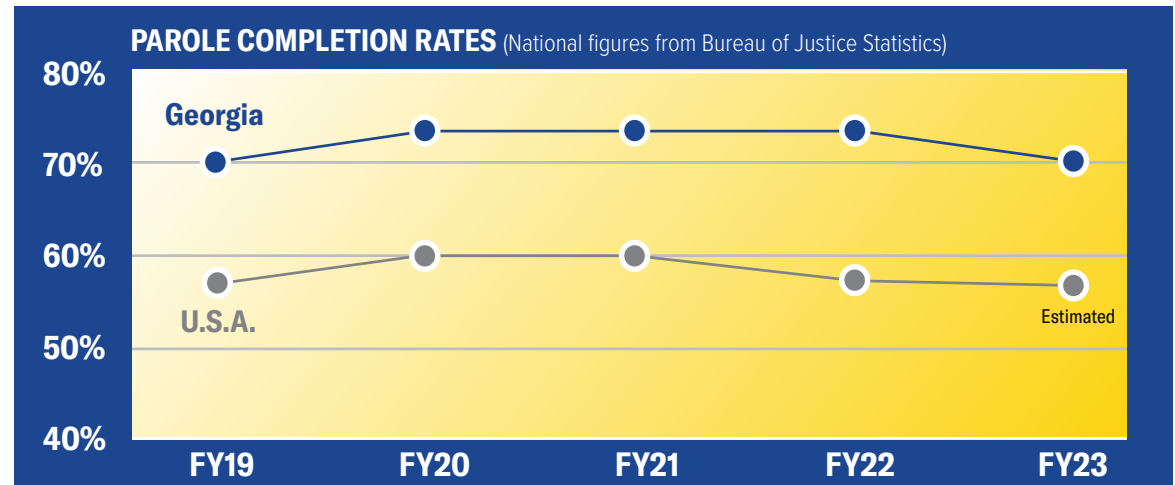
## Parole Violations

The Parole Board enhances public safety by quickly responding to offenders who violate the conditions of their parole. Violations of parole consist of new criminal charges (felony and misdemeanor) and technical violations related to failing to follow the conditions of their parole. The offenders who violate the terms of their release may have their parole revoked and be returned to prison. When a violation occurs, the supervising officer generates a report detailing the delinquent behavior. Upon receipt of the report, the district operations manager conducts a thorough case investigation to de-

termine what action the Board should take in the best interest of public safety. The recommendation to the Board could be treatment referral up to revocation of parole.

## Warrants/GCIC

State law authorizes the Parole Board Members to issue warrants for the arrest of alleged parole violators. Upon notification that an offender has violated the conditions of release, the district operations manager reviews the violations and the case history to determine if a Board Warrant should be issued to immediately place the offender into custody. In FY23, a total of 4,161 warrants were issued by the Parole Board. If the offender cannot be immediately located, the Parole Board Warrant is then placed in the Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) system or the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) system. Both systems are connected to the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) database that is used by law enforcement agencies for wanted person entry.



In FY23, the GCIC Unit entered 2,427 warrants into the GCIC/NCIC system. By accessing the system, law enforcement agencies know if an offender should be taken into custody.

## Revocations & Parole Revocation Hearings

During FY23, the Board revoked 1,552 parole violators returning the offenders to prison to serve their sentences in confinement. The number revoked decreased by 273 from the previous fiscal year. Of the FY23 total number of revocations, less than 1% of those revoked, were revoked based on technical violations which include, but not limited to; drug use, curfew violations, or failure to pay fines and fees. A revocation can occur during a parole revocation hearing, when the offender signs a waiver to a revocation hearing, or automatic revocation if the conditions exist according to O.C.G.A. § 42-9-51. The appropriate recommendations and enforcement of intermediate

### PAROLE REVOCATIONS FY19-FY23

FY19	2,720
FY20	2,199
FY21	2,373
FY22	1,825
FY23	1,552

sanctions, such as treatment referral, administrative hearings, electronic monitoring, GPS monitoring, day reporting centers and parole detention centers result in the low percentage of technical parole violators being revoked and returned to prison. The purpose of intermediate sanctions is to bring the offenders who are not a threat to public safety back into

compliance with their parole conditions. Upon the establishment of probable cause, parole revocation hearings are held to address violations of parole. Parole Board Members conducted 254 final revocation hearings during FY23. Each hearing is presided over by an individual Board Member who hears the evidence in the case and makes a recommendation to the full Board to either revoke parole and return the offender to prison or continue parole and community supervision. Most offenders facing parole revocation proceedings admit their parole violations and sign a waiver to be returned to prison eliminating a final hearing. The district operations managers are responsible for scheduling and managing the parole revocation hearing process. Parole revocation hearings are conducted from the Board's central office in Atlanta via video conferencing or in person at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson. For video conference hearings, the offender,





the officer of record and the Board Member may be in various locations. Use of this technology has reduced travel costs for all three agencies involved in the process, the Parole Board, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Community Supervision.

## Commutations

The State Board of Pardons and Paroles may grant other forms of clemency to meet special needs of the criminal justice system. The Parole Board has the authority to commute an offender's sentence to time served. This includes offenders serving parole. Offenders serving parole may petition to have their prison sentences commuted by the Board. Senate Bill 174, passed in 2017, included a provision requiring the Board to consider commuting the sentences of specific offenders serving a split sentence who have successfully completed twelve (12) consecutive months of parole supervision (O.C.G.A. § 42-8-21). Under provisions of the legislation, offenders must have probation to serve following the prison portion of their sentence. The district operations managers conduct a thorough investigation of cases meeting the criteria for consideration by the Board. During FY 2023, the Parole Board considered 795 cases for commutation under SB174 and commuted ten (10) cases that met the strict criteria of the Board. Under SB174, the prison/parole portion of the sentence ends and the case transfers to probation supervision.

## District Operations Managers

The district operations manager thoroughly investigates alleged parole violations and commutation requests and determines what appropriate actions are to be recommended to the Board in the interest of public safety. This may include that a Board Warrant be issued to



take an offender into custody or a request for additional investigative information. The district operations managers are assigned to the ten (10) Judicial Districts in the state of Georgia and are an integral link between the Board and the Department of Community Supervision (DCS), as it relates to parole violators and commutations. District operations managers are P.O.S.T. certified officers and P.O.S.T. certified general and or firearm instructors. In addition to managing the parole violations, revocation, and commutation process, they provide training to other law enforcement and perform Board security and special law enforcement details. They are required to complete twenty (20) hours of P.O.S.T. training each year. The training includes weapons requalification.

## Interstate Compact

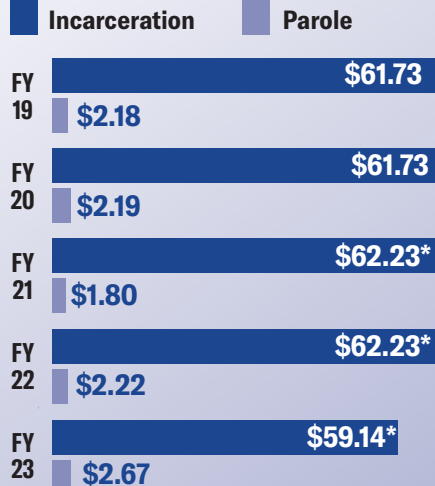
The State Board of Pardons and Paroles, in FY23, was a member of the Interstate Commis-

sion for Adult Offender Supervision (ICAOS). ICAOS is responsible for creating and upholding the rules of the Commission. ICAOS comprises all fifty (50) states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the United States Virgin Islands. The State Board of Pardons and Paroles' Interstate Compact Unit is responsible for processing the transfer of all Georgia inmates paroled to an out-of-state residence. In addition, the unit responded to violations, conducted probable cause hearings, handled extraditions, and addressed victim issues relating to these cases. During FY23, the unit released 255 offenders to out-of-state supervision. As of June 30, 2023, there were 2,241 Georgia offenders under active parole supervision in Compact states and 1,405 other Compact state offenders on parole supervision in Georgia. Another responsibility of the unit is to release foreign national offenders to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detainees.

## Cost Avoidance

The graph below for FY19-FY23 shows cost of incarceration versus cost of supervision, per day, for state of Georgia.

### COST PER DAY



\* Most recent Ga. Dept. of Corrections' cost per day

## FY23 Fiscal Year Cost Avoidance \$319 MILLION

The fiscal year cost avoidance is calculated based on the FY23 cost per day to incarcerate a state inmate in Georgia (\*\$59.14) compared to the community supervision cost per day (\$2.67). In FY23, the annual cost avoidance to the prison system because of offenders serving their sentence on parole is calculated at more than \$319 million.

FY22 **\$376 million**

FY21 **\$404 million**

FY20 **\$399 million**

FY19 **\$433 million**

\* Most recent Ga. Dept. of Corrections' cost per day

Via the ICE Rapid REPAT (Removal of Eligible Parolees Accepted for Transfer) Program, 17 foreign national offenders were released to ICE for deportation at an estimated cost avoidance of \$3,511,452.21.

## Scanning and Imaging

The Scanning and Imaging Unit has an integral role in the Parole Board's transition to a paperless environment. During FY23, 40,272 documents were scanned into the case management systems (Portal, GPEDS and TRIM system) utilized by the Board to make parole decisions. The unit images offender documents that are generated daily, to include correspondence, revocation documents and victim notifications. There were 185 active lifer offender parole files scanned and 11,423 archived files imaged during the fiscal year. There are approximately 137,568 archived files

remaining to be imaged. Upon completion, all the Parole Board's files will be accessible electronically.

## New Direction Recovery Program

The New Direction Recovery Program located at the Treutlen Probation Detention Center is an intensive addiction program for parolees who are both higher risk and higher need offenders who were not successful in community-based treatment and supervision. The Parole Board utilizes the program as an alternative to revocation for some offenders. For FY23, fifty-five (55) parolees were referred to the program. As of June 30, 2023, 50 parolees had graduated from the program during the fiscal year and were returned to parole supervision. Some graduates were enrolled during the previous fiscal year.







# Georgia Office of Victim Services

The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) delivers post-conviction victim services in Georgia. The office is the service delivery source of post-conviction notifications for all registered crime victims with offenders housed and/or supervised in Georgia.

The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) ensures the registered crime victim's voice is heard throughout the parole process and throughout the community supervision process. Three state agencies are represented by the office. They are the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, the Department of Corrections, and the Department of Community Supervision. The office provides critical services to registered crime victims whose offenders are in prison or under community supervision. GOVS keeps registered victims updated on the parole status of their offenders and notifies them if an offender is being considered for parole or has been released from confinement. GOVS also operates the Georgia Victim Information Program (GA-V.I.P.), a 24-hour automated information system that

provides victims and their families with access to information about their offenders. The office corresponds with victims and receives information directly from them, to help ensure that victims' voices are heard throughout the criminal justice process.

In FY23, 10,694 phone calls from or to victims were fielded by staff, 31,596 outgoing correspondences were sent to victims in response to concerns and 10,355 correspondences were received from victims and filed with the office.

## Georgia Victim Information Program - GA-V.I.P.

The Georgia Victim Information Program, GA-V.I.P., is a 24-hour automated information system providing registered crime victims and/or their family members with access to

information about their offender. By completing a victim impact statement or crime victim notification request form, victims can be registered with GA-V.I.P. The forms can be completed online at [www.pap.georgia.gov](http://www.pap.georgia.gov) or forms can be requested by calling 404-651-6668 or 1-800-593-9474. Upon registering, victims are issued a PIN (Personal Identification Number). When accessing the system (1-800-593-9474), victims can learn the status of the offender. Also, through GA-V.I.P., registered victims receive information on a prison release after the inmate completes the court ordered term of incarceration (end of sentence), or if the inmate is placed on community supervision. For FY23, there were 3,561 new GA-V.I.P. registrants and 4,379 phone calls from victims were logged into the system. The system made 3,051 calls to victims.

### GEORGIA OFFICE OF VICTIM SERVICES

### FY23 BY THE NUMBERS

**10,694**

telephone calls handled

**31,596**

pieces of correspondence sent

**10,355**

pieces of correspondence received



## Victim Offender Dialogue

The Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) program provides an opportunity for victims of violent crime to have a safe, structured, one-on-one meeting with the offender who committed the crime. The program allows the victim and offender to discuss the crime and its impact on the victim. VOD can only be initiated by the victim. Additionally, the offender must agree to participate, and must acknowledge his/her role in the crime and that he/she will not receive special consideration by the Board for participating. VOD requires a lengthy preparation process which involves both the victim and the offender working separately with a trained facilitator. In fiscal year (FY) 2023, three VOD dialogues were initiated and completed. Seven more dialogues are in the process to be completed in FY 2024.

## Victim Support Partners

The Victim Support Partners (VSPs) program represents a comprehensive network spanning across the entire state, consisting of crime victims registered with the Georgia Office of Victim Services. Within this network, the dedicated victim volunteers spend time to offer aid,

counsel, and solace to fellow crime victims throughout the post-conviction phase. These Victim Support Partners convene for routine group gatherings, actively engage in Victim Impact Sessions, and provide assistance to other survivors embarking on the journey of preparing for Victim Offender Dialogues. Moreover, they play an active role in community affairs endorsed by the Georgia Office of Victim Services, further reinforcing the program's commitment to fostering a culture of support and recovery.

## Victim Impact Sessions

Victim Impact Sessions (VIS) were completed during FY 2023. These sessions allow victims whose offender is within twelve to eighteen months of parole consideration to discuss their case in a close-knit setting with a Board Member, a GOVS staff member, and a senior hearing examiner. By focusing on cases soon to be reviewed for parole consideration, the Board is receiving up to date and timely information from both the victim and the district attorney. In FY23, eight (8) Victim Impact Sessions were conducted. The sessions were conducted in the Towaliga, Eastern, Atlanta, Blue Ridge,



Chattahoochee, Appalachian, Enotah, and Flint judicial circuits.

## FY 2023 Victim-Centered Events and Highlights

The Georgia Office of Victim Services (GOVS) conducted their most successful week of events for National Crime Victims' Rights Week in April 2023. They included a symposium at Georgia State University, "A Conversation on Victims' Rights." In FY23, GOVS was given the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council's Georgia Crime Victim Service Collaborative and Innovative Project Award. The award was shared with the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia (PAC). It was given for the Victim Impact Sessions (VIS) conducted by GOVS and hosted by prosecutors across the state.

Other notable FY 2023 GOVS events: GOVS presented Georgia's Unique Approach to serving crime victims post-conviction at the National Association of Victim Assistance in Corrections conference in New Hampshire; presented at Fulton County's Victim Advocate Master Training; participated in Georgia College & State University Victimology and Senior Seminars; and participated in presentations to District Attorney Offices across the state.







# Human Resources & Training

## Human Resources FY 2023

The Office of Human Resources is committed to ensuring that agency staff are consistently provided training and development opportunities. In FY 2023, the Office of Human Resources partnered with state and federal agencies to provide knowledge and skills regarding the role of the Georgia Commission on Equal Opportunity and the U.S. EEOC's rules. Additionally, the Office of Human Resources facilitated numerous training classes for employees and management. Training Sessions facilitated:

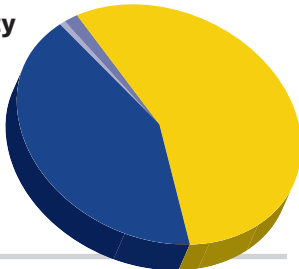
- Resetting After Covid/The New Norm
- Caregiving While Working
- Let's Talk Soft Skills
- Upskill Reskill or Hire
- Achieving Professional Deportment
- Aspiring Leaders of Tomorrow
- Workplace Civility
- Personal Finance/Retirement Planning

## PAP Statistics

Full-time Employees .....	175
Sworn.....	51
Non-sworn .....	124

## Staff by race/ethnicity

Black	99
White	72
Asian	3
Other	1



The agency employs 11 U.S. military veterans.

## Office of Training FY 2023

All agency employees must complete in-service training on an annual basis. Sworn staff must complete a minimum of 20 hours annually which includes mandatory firearms requalification, use of deadly force and De-escalation and Community Policing training. Non-sworn staff must complete a minimum of eight hours of training annually. Both sworn and non-sworn staff must complete Unlawful Harassment and Professionalism and Ethics training each year as a part of their training hours and any other training as prescribed by law.



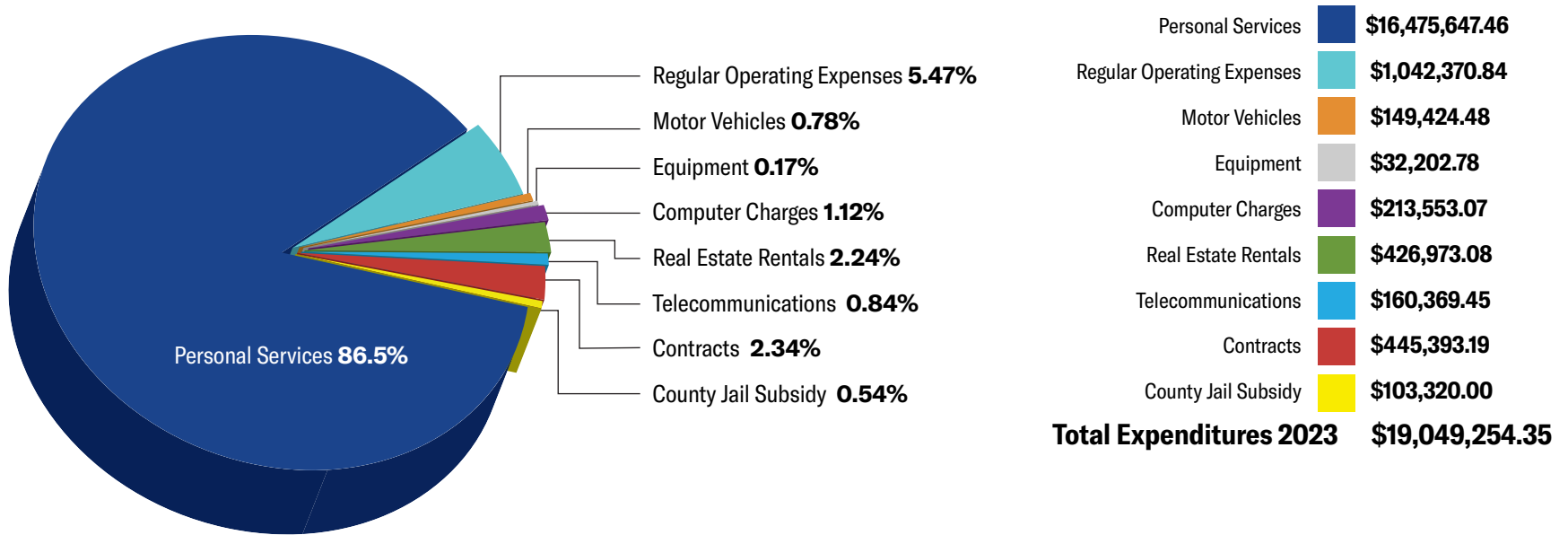
## TRAINING HOURS TAKEN BY STAFF

Sworn staff	5,010
Non-sworn staff	2,415
Training hours delivered by Parole Training Office	1,617



# BUDGET

## FY 2023 Expenditures by Object Class (Total Funds)



## FY 2023 Budget & Expenditures by Program (Total Funds)

Program	FY 2023 Budget	FY 2023 Expenditures	% of Total Budget
Board Administration	2,308,252.00	2,291,325.02	12.0767%
Clemency Decisions	16,100,129.00	16,068,823.23	84.2353%
Victim Services	704,910.00	689,106.10	3.6880%
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>19,113,291.00</b>	<b>19,049,254.35</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

## FY 2023 Expenditures by Fund Type (Total Funds)

Fund Type	FY 2023
State Funds	\$18,894,679.32
Federal Funds	\$103,712.24
Other Funds	\$50,862.79
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>\$19,049,254.35</b>







# STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES **ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023**