

## **July 8 Call-in day info: Urging Governor Shapiro to Support House Bill 443!**

### **BACKGROUND**

On March 26, 2026, the PA Supreme Court issued a ruling in *Commonwealth v. Lee* that mandatory life-without-parole sentences for 2nd-degree homicide are unconstitutional. They agreed with our movement that condemning someone to spend their entire life in prison, without them being convicted of any premeditation – or even knowledge that harm could be caused – constitutes “cruel punishment” and therefore goes against Pennsylvania’s Constitution. Their ruling means that more than 1000 people in PA prisons are serving an illegal death-by-incarceration sentence.

The Court “stayed” its ruling, putting it on pause to give the Pennsylvania legislature 120 days (until July 24) to fix this issue. For years, our groups have been pushing simple legislation that would allow as many people as possible the chance at parole as quickly as possible. In 2024, PA House of Representatives Judiciary Committee Chair Tim Briggs agreed to sponsor HB 443, a bill that would allow everyone currently serving a 2nd-degree homicide sentence to see the Parole Board after 25 years, with no mandatory minimum for people convicted of 2nd degree in the future.

Governor Shapiro had filed a brief supporting the *Lee* case, suggesting the Court allow the legislature and his office the opportunity to fix these sentences through legislation. Now, with only 16 days left, the legislature has yet to pass fair and meaningful legislation. We need to send a clear message to the Governor that we want him to support HB 443 and work with the General Assembly to pass this bill before the deadline.

### **TARGETS**

- PA Governor Shapiro
  - Call: 717-787-2500
  - Text: 717-788-8990

### **SCRIPT FOR PHONE CALLS**

(NOTE: These phone calls can be very short, and it’s fine to just get across the first couple sentences below; the point is to make sure the Governor knows lots of people care about and support this bill, so not everyone has to have long conversations. But you can keep talking to the person if you’d like and explain more why you think their support is so important; there are a few talking points below to help get you started, but you can add whatever you feel would be best).

#### ***The main message!***

Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I’m calling about HB443, the second degree murder bill. I want this bill passed and opportunities for release offered to those serving unconstitutional sentences. I’m disappointed that nearly four months have passed since the PA Supreme Court determined these sentences were unconstitutional and no remedy has been offered.

***Some other talking points:***

- The sentence was already ruled unconstitutional unanimously by all the Court judges—both Democrat and Republican—so we shouldn't let politics interfere with justice. Democrats should always be against mandatory minimums.
- No other state in the country has a sentence as harsh as Pennsylvania's 2nd degree homicide
- Not acting on this issue prevents hundreds of mature, rehabilitated people from coming home to their communities. We shouldn't delay it any further at this stage.
- I believe in second chances and that everyone should be judged on their own merits. Life without parole sentences are always cruel and unreasonable and deny people's basic humanity.

Time is running out! I would like to see Governor Shapiro work with the General Assembly, as he suggested in his amicus brief in the *Lee* case, to move HB 443 to a vote. **Once you've had an opportunity to discuss my concerns with the Governor, can you please call me back at [phone number]\_\_\_\_\_ to share his position on bringing HB 443 to a vote quickly?**

Report back on how your call went here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1zub3BVystG5uY5gpWnsB6TuAqn96UuJq1gtaKhu-G0Y/edit?usp=sharing>