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Lt. Gov. Austin Davis Backs House Speaker Joanna McClinton's Legislation to Improve Commutations Process

HARRISBURG – As part of the Shapiro-Davis Administration's commitment to making Pennsylvania a place for second chances, Lt. Gov. Austin Davis today endorsed House Speaker Joanna McClinton's constitutional amendment to update the commutations process.

"As chair of the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons, I have a huge responsibility resting on my shoulders," **said Lt. Gov. Davis**. "These decisions we make impact lives, families and whole communities. I do not make those decisions lightly.

"Both Governor Shapiro and I believe that Pennsylvania is a place for second chances. We believe that people have the capacity to change, to make amends, to return to the community and make our Commonwealth a better place through their example. However, the current system for commutations does not reflect that vision. That's why I'm supporting Speaker Joanna McClinton's legislation to improve the commutations process, empower each member of the Board of Pardons to vote their conscience and allow for meritorious applicants to have a greater opportunity for a second chance."

[House Bill 1410](#) would require a majority vote of the Board of Pardons, rather than the current requirement of a unanimous vote, to recommend an application for commutation to the Governor in cases of life sentences. For other sentences and for pardon applicants, the process only requires a majority of the five board members to vote for recommendation. The unanimous vote requirement was a change made in the 1990s; prior to that, it was uniform for pardons and commutations.

"Over the past decade, Pennsylvania has made important criminal justice reforms, but there is more we can and should be doing," **said House Speaker Joanna McClinton**. "Replacing Pennsylvania's burdensome unanimous vote requirement by the Pardon Board with the three-fifths standard that served our state well for most of its history is good for our overcrowded correctional institutions and gives Pennsylvanians an opportunity to transform their lives and re-engage with their communities."

"Clemency must be restored to its historical norm as a real, robust mechanism of second chances for those who are worthy," **said FAMM Policy Associate Bryan Widenhouse**. "For families dealing with extreme sentences, it is their only hope. Speaker McClinton's bill is absolutely critical, and FAMM will do all we can to help move it forward."

The Shapiro-Davis Administration is working to improve the clemency process in additional ways.

- In July, [the Board of Pardons expanded its “expedited review” process for pardon applicants](#) to make it more efficient, providing applicants with a clear and transparent process to follow.
- The recently approved state budget also invests \$355,000 into a dedicated clemency unit within the Department of Corrections to address the backlog of applications for pardons and commutations.
- In addition, [Lt. Gov. Davis has championed legislation to streamline the process for pardoned Pennsylvanians to clear their records and realize a fresh start](#). This legislation advanced through the Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support in September.



Lt. Gov. Austin Davis, more photos/video available at [PACast.com](https://www.pacast.com)

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