

# ***2021-2022 Legislative Update***

## The 191st Legislative Session: 2019-2020

PRFA was able to gain the introduction of bills ([H. 3358](#) and [S. 826](#)) which would require parole reviews for all who had been imprisoned for more than 25 years. (See [Proposed Legislation](#) for a brief outline of these bills.)

A successful hearing occurred October 8, 2019 on these bills, with nearly 60 individuals representing a wide range of experience and organizations testifying in support, and some nine individuals testifying in opposition. The bills had gained over 34 Senate and Representative co-sponsors, a very impressive number for this first effort.

On Wednesday, February 5, 2020 the Joint Committee on the Judiciary decided to send both bills “to study” which translated as no further consideration that year.

## The 192nd Legislative Session: 2021-2022

A bill containing the same language has been introduced for the current session of 2021-2022. In addition, H.1797, this session’s number for the bill, has an added section which mandates the Department of Correction institute Restorative Justice programming in all prisons in which persons serving sentences in excess of 25 years are housed.

Victims’ families and friends carry a heavy burden with the loss of a loved one. It is our expectation that dialogue about the loss can ameliorate that burden. This burden is not lessened by placing an equivalent burden on others’ shoulders, but rather by sharing the burden even with those whose violence created the weight. Restorative Justice provides such healing opportunities for the victims’ survivors to meet with the offenders, or as needed, representatives of either offenders or victims’ survivors, and as appropriate with friends from their respective communities, in a setting with professional guidance. Such programs already exist throughout the Commonwealth, as recognized by the M.G.L. Chapter 276B.

The work will continue in an effort to broaden support among legislators and among citizens and organizations. We want to encourage other religious organizations to join with the Episcopal Dioceses of Massachusetts and the Massachusetts Conference of the United Church of Christ in endorsing the concept of ending life sentences without parole.