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# Press Release

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## Two reports from CAPPS, 28 former corrections officials back need for “lifer” parole process reforms

*Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending (CAPPS) teleconference to discuss release of two reports and a statement from former corrections officials on the urgent need to reform Michigan’s parole review process for people serving parolable life sentences:*

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10 AM, Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2014 — Call-in: (712) 432-1500 - Access Code: 838128

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**Lansing, Mich.** — Former corrections officials who served under both Republican and Democratic administrations have signed a statement calling for reform of the parole review process for people serving parolable life sentences. *Michigan Department of Corrections Professionals Comment on Lifer Paroles* represents the views of 28 experienced Michigan Department of Corrections professionals who have known hundreds of parolable lifers.

Both the Citizens Alliance on Prisons and Public Spending (CAPPS) and the former corrections officials call for accountability and transparency in the parole review process. CAPPS released a package today that includes the statement and two new reports:

- *Parolable lifers in Michigan: paying the price of unchecked discretion* describes the parole review process and the changes in parole board policies and practices that caused the number of paroles for lifers to plummet, with recommendations for reform. It demonstrates how the exercise of unchecked discretion by both the parole board and successor sentencing judges leads to unexplained and inexplicable decisions to deny paroles for five years at a time, at a cost of \$200,000 per prisoner
- *Michigan’s parolable lifers: the cost of a broken process*, is a demographic snapshot of the roughly 850 aging, low-risk lifers who are currently eligible for parole.

The two reports show how \$17 million a year in corrections spending could safely be saved by reinstating parole review procedures that had served the state well for decades. Changes since 1992, well after most of the current lifers were sentenced, allow the parole board to deny paroles without interviewing prisoners, assessing their re-offense risk, or providing reasons. There is no longer any judicial review to ensure the board’s decisions are consistent or objective. In addition, successor sentencing judges, with no current knowledge of the individual, can unilaterally stop paroles.

The parole board’s unlimited discretion in release decisions and the judicial veto have been used to keep lifers behind bars for years or decades longer than their sentencing judges intended. Although they were eligible for release at ten years, of the 613 who are age 50 or older, 491 have served at least 25 years while nearly 240 have served 35 years or more. #