

## Executive Department

State of California

### COMMUTATION OF SENTENCE

#### Jarrett Harper

In 1999, 17-year-old Jarrett Harper and a friend robbed Phillip Piazza and his brother in Mr. Piazza's home. Several weeks later, Mr. Harper returned to Mr. Piazza's house and stabbed him, then set the house on fire and stole Mr. Piazza's car. Mr. Piazza later died at the hospital during surgery. On May 10, 2001, the Los Angeles County Superior Court sentenced Mr. Harper to life without the possibility of parole plus 10 years for murder, arson, and two counts of robbery. Due to Mr. Harper's age at the time of the crime, subsequent U.S. and California Supreme Court decisions, and related changes to state law, he is eligible for youthful offender parole consideration in 2024.

During an investigation by the Board of Parole Hearings, Mr. Harper reported that the victim, Mr. Piazza, had sexually abused him for years starting when Mr. Harper was about seven years old. Mr. Harper told no one about the abuse until he was 13 and learned that his younger brother had also been sexually abused by Mr. Piazza. Because of their extremely unstable home life, the brothers pledged to keep the abuse a secret. In prison, Mr. Harper started a discussion group for inmates who had been sexually abused, so they could confront more directly – and share – their experiences. Mr. Harper explained that working to understand his past strengthened his commitment to helping others who had experienced similar trauma, and gave him more remorse for his victim. In his application for clemency, Mr. Harper wrote, "I desire to show that I have learned from my past terrible choices and tragic events that I cast on the Piazza family. I have matured into a moral, responsible, and positive contributor to society. I ask for a commutation because I am not the same young boy who committed crime eighteen years ago."

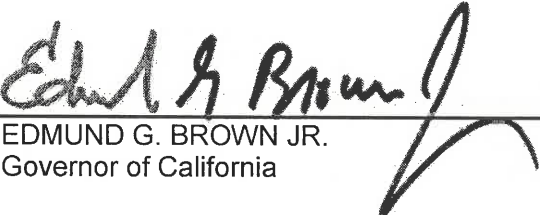
Mr. Harper is now 35 years old and has been incarcerated for almost two decades. He has only been disciplined four times during that time, and has never been involved with drugs or gangs. He earned his high school diploma and several vocational certifications, including one in paralegal studies. Mr. Harper has participated in numerous self-help classes including Victim Sensitivity Awareness, Anger Management, Getting Out by Going In, and Creative Conflict Resolution. He has also facilitated multiple groups for other inmates. In 2017, a correctional sergeant commended Mr. Harper for his dedication to Lancaster's Progressive Programming Facility and wrote, "He participates in numerous self-help groups and peer to peer classes, both as a student and a facilitator, working to improve himself while providing a positive example to his fellow inmates... If the opportunity to return to society were ever given, I believe that Inmate Harper would be a model citizen." In 2014, one of Mr. Harper's supervisors wrote, "I have been a correctional officer for over 20 years and I've rarely come across an inmate with such a positive attitude as Mr. Harper... if Inmate Harper were to be released, I would feel safe with having him as my next-door neighbor." Mr. Harper's fiancée, brother, and friends plan to help support him if he is released.

Based on his age at the time of this crime, his sincere remorse, and his commitment to rehabilitation, I believe Mr. Harper has earned an earlier opportunity to make his case to the Board of Parole Hearings so it can determine whether he is suitable for parole.


**THEREFORE, I, EDMUND G. BROWN JR.**, Governor of the State of California, by virtue of the power and authority vested in me by the Constitution and statutes of the State of California, do hereby commute the sentence of Jarrett Harper to a total of 20 years to life.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF** I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 17<sup>th</sup> Day of August, 2018.



  
EDMUND G. BROWN JR.  
Governor of California

**ATTEST:**

  
ALEX PADILLA  
Secretary of State