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DA CRUZ OPPOSES PAROLE FOR CONVICTED MURDERER

NATICK – Plymouth County District Attorney Timothy J. Cruz testified before the parole board against the release of a man convicted of first-degree murder in commission of a 1987 armed robbery.

Michael Eagles, 59, and co-defendant Jeffrey Roberio, were found guilty of first-degree murder and armed robbery by Plymouth County juries in 1987 in connection with the brutal slaying of 79-year-old Lewis Jennings of Middleboro.

On July 29, 1986, Roberio and Eagles concocted a plan to break into Jennings' home and steal a large amount of cash. During his hearing before the state parole board Wednesday, Eagles stated his motive for the robbery was to fuel his drug addiction. The pair broke into the Middleboro home and beat Jennings while demanding to know where he stored his money. Roberio and Eagles then proceeded to leave a badly injured Jennings to succumb to his injuries while they made off with the victim's hard-earned money. An autopsy found Jennings' spine had been fractured, an elbow had been dislocated, several ribs and neck bones had been fractured, and he suffered extensive injuries to his entire face.

The defendant was convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life without possibility of parole. In 2024, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court's ruling in *Commonwealth v. Mattis* determined that life without parole sentences are unconstitutional as applied to "emerging adults" between the ages of 18 – 20. As a result of this decision, Eagles became eligible for parole.

Eagles appeared before the state parole board at a hearing held yesterday morning, and DA Cruz testified in opposition to Eagles' release.

"Sitting through this parole board hearing, we are reminded of the pain and suffering that the Jennings and Villaire families have had to endure," DA Cruz told the board. "We live in a world where defendants are treated as victims, and the real victims are seated over there. In my opinion, this man should not be released."

A decision by the parole board will be rendered in Eagles' case in the coming months.

