

Compassionate Release Practicum

Petitioning for Prisoners' Medical Rights

The Compassionate Release Practicum provides students an opportunity unique among Massachusetts law schools to **directly represent inmates** who may be entitled to release under Massachusetts's new "medical parole" law.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

In this one-semester, one- or two-credit practicum, students help represent terminally ill and/or permanently incapacitated prisoners in their petitions for compassionate release. The Massachusetts "Medical Parole" law, G. L. c.119A, passed in the spring of 2018, provides a mechanism for inmates with debilitating and terminal illnesses, who are otherwise likely to die in custody, to obtain release from prison. The purpose of the law is to allow prisoners to obtain a measure of human dignity and to receive appropriate palliative care for which they might not have access while incarcerated.

Students, working under the supervision of an attorney, are deeply involved in initiating a prisoner's bid for release – from meeting with the client and collecting records to, where appropriate, drafting and litigating the petition for release. Students may also help file an appeal from the Department of Correction's denial of a client's petition. As part of their work in the classroom, students explore the theoretical and constitutional underpinnings of the legislation and engage in legal and policy discussions around this rapidly evolving area of law. This Practicum provides

students a chance to hone their legal writing, client counseling, and negotiation skills, as well as develop a substantive understanding of the compassionate release law and the civil procedure associated with litigating such a case in court.

We warmly welcome all applicants and remind students that Boston University policy prohibits discrimination against any individual on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, military service, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, or because of marital, parental, or veteran status, and acts in conformity with all applicable state and federal laws. This policy extends to academic programs, including School of Law's Clinics and Externships. The Practicum works with students and BU's Office of Disability & Access Services to arrange reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Though the legislation was passed less than a decade ago, there is already a backlog of prisoners who need assistance in seeking compassionate



release. Students in the Practicum have an opportunity that is unique among law schools in the region to perform rich and rewarding work in a developing area of law and to engage with the legislative process as it continues to evolve.

 bu.edu/law/clinics-apply