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ISRAEL JEROME GARCIA DENIED PAROLE FOR 1995 HOMICIDE

Santa Cruz County District Attorney Jeffrey S. Rosell announced today that parole was denied for Israel Jerome Garcia. In 1996, Mr. Garcia was convicted of the brutal murder of his then landlord, V.G. "Tex" Townsend. Garcia, who was 15 years old at the time, robbed the victim and then stabbed him 44 times with a razor. He was prosecuted as an adult and was convicted of first-degree murder. Garcia, now 37, has served 22 years of a 25-to-life sentence and was eligible for early parole because of the enactment of Senate Bill 260, making individuals who committed their crimes while under the age of 23, eligible for early parole.

While in prison, Garcia continued a life of criminality. He was involved in violent gang-related behavior and extensive drug sales and trafficking within the prison, for which he was prosecuted and convicted. It was only since 2014 that Garcia has been free of disciplinary action and has appeared to have changed his behavior by engaging in sobriety and educational programs.

Assistant District Attorney Johanna Schonfield attended the hearing to speak on behalf of the victim and his loved ones. She objected to Garcia's release, given the brutal nature of the murder he committed and that his now-improved behavior is far too recent to demonstrate that he is truly rehabilitated. In denying parole, the Board found that despite recent positive changes in Garcia's life and behavior, he still represented a danger to the community.

In response to the Board's decision, ADA Schonfield stated, "The District Attorney's Office is committed to speaking out on behalf of victims, no matter how many years have elapsed since the crime was committed. The DA's office will aggressively and ethically pursue all avenues to ensure that violent offenders are not released back into our community."