

Christine Ragosta
Probation and Parole Officer II
RI Department of Corrections
Providence Felony Unit
49 Pavilion Avenue
Providence, RI 02903

April 21, 2025

The Honorable Christopher O'Brien
Finance Committee
State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Representative O'Brien,

My name is Christine Ragosta, and I am a Probation Officer with the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. I am writing to respectfully urge your support for House Bill No. 5765, which would allow Rhode Island Probation and Parole Officers to be considered for MERS benefits.

Probation and Parole Officers are public safety professionals who hold a unique position in state government. Being a Probation and Parole Officer carries great responsibility to community safety by supervising and monitoring offenders who are conditionally released to the community by conducting both scheduled and unscheduled office sessions, workplace and other community visits including meeting with offenders in their homes. When conducting these visits, we are often exposed to high-risk environments where we encounter a variety of situations such as guns and other weapons, substance use and other drug paraphernalia, domestic violence and other mental health crises, to name a few.

Probation and Parole Officers make decisions every day that impact the safety of the community. We are directly responsible to provide the Courts and Parole Board with detailed reports on the status of each offender living in the community. These reports summarize if the offender is following court orders, and if the offender is safe living in the community. If a Probation and Parole Officer believes an offender is a danger to himself or herself, or a danger to the community or both; we are directly responsible to file violations with the Court or Parole Board to address the non-compliance (violation), which may or may not result in offender incarceration.

The overall mission and vision of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections Probation and Parole is to increase public safety by promoting positive change in offender behavior, successfully reintegrating offenders into society and assisting victims of crime while upholding core values and ethics to reduce crime, recidivism and victimization, by motivating offenders to become productive and law-abiding members of society. This is a difficult and challenging job with large caseloads, limited resources, significant learning curve, requiring a diverse skill set. Probation and Parole Officers are public safety professionals who work collaboratively with court officials, law enforcement professionals, state agencies, service providers, education

professionals and employers. I am proud to be a Probation Officer and take pride in my important work. This profession is emotionally and physically taxing. We are required to be adaptable and responsive under pressure while maintaining composure and professionalism in unpredictable and often high-stress and high-risk environments. These demands take a toll over time, and as Probation and Parole officers age, the cumulative impact can lead to increased rates of injury, burnout, mental health or substance issues, long-term health issues, particularly when required to work until the current retirement age of 67.

I urge you to support this important bill to recognize the dedicated men and women who work as Probation and Parole Officers in the state of Rhode Island as public safety professionals.

Sincerely,

Christine Ragosta
Probation and Parole Officer II
RI Department of Corrections