

Chris O'Brien

From: Jean-Paul Dujardin <jeanpaul82879@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 21, 2025 2:57 PM
To: House Finance Committee
Subject: Regarding Bill 5765

I am writing to you in reference to Bill 5765. Though I have worked for the State of RI as a Probation and Parole Officer for over 15 years, I am writing not on behalf of the Department of Corrections, but as a private citizen.

We, as Probation Officers, are a highly professional group that have skills in many areas, but the one that we hold paramount, is our work as safety professionals. And this is the one I wish to touch upon. In my role, there has been many times Probationers have threatened me bodily harm. That is what happens when you do your job, right: when you hold someone accountable. Quite simply, most don't want to be held accountable, there is pushback. Even Probationers that "really liked" me have threatened to go to my house to attack me when I asked they be held as a violator. Telling the sheriff, handcuffing him: "I know where he lives- and telling them my (correct) address." Taking away someone's freedom can do that. Other times, I've had gang members look to me for protection from a rival gang member, asking me to walk them to their car for protection. I've had extremely dangerous probationers have it out for me because I supposedly "looked at them funny," when conducting a home visit. (Think of people like Aaron Hernandez, who, when someone accidentally bumped into him at a bar, he chased them down in his car and murdered them. We see those same very dangerous individuals with those same mindsets). Under certain situations, especially, dealing with dangerous situations or dangerous people, sometimes simple things like agility are what saves you. Unfortunately, we lose agility with age. Though not in law enforcement-my own father died because he wasn't "quick enough on his feet." This job, however, places us in many dangerous situations. Thus, the reason we are given bullet proof vests and carry OC spray. Federal probation Officers are given the choice whether or not to carry firearms, we do not. But the dangers are no different. The Federal Probation Department has a mandatory retirement age, for they recognize the importance of such, instead of pushing the retirement age back in ridicules fashion.

I also notice an increase in the number of stellar RI Probation Officers leaving for other endeavors: to take positions as Massachusetts Probation Officers or Federal Probation Officers where, quite simply, the pay and benefits are better. When I started this job and was weighing my options of where to start my career path, I took into account things are as longevity and the pension. Already. I am getting over 15% less salary each year than I was promised due to loss in longevity, and my pension is accruing at a much lower percentage. As stated previously, this job requires great skill, requiring expertise in a multitude of different areas. When I applied for this position, the Department of Administration representative relayed to me that they were over 2000 applicants, with only a few job openings. But even with that high standard, each Probation Officer would likely attest that they are learning new things every single day on the job for at least a few years, even though we already have a rigorous training. Thus, when our department loses a Probation Officer for other opportunities, that comes as a great loss. It also comes at a great expense to get a new worker at the level they need to be at. I won't lie, despite loving my job, despite feeling very confident in my abilities and knowing how I am helping to change and protect our society, I sometimes feel the urge to leave to places in the private sector, where the opportunities for myself are so much greater. Please do all you can to retain this talented group of individuals in the Department.

Thank you for your willingness to help address this situation, Jean-Paul Dujardin.

Sent from my iPhone