

April 22, 2025

Dear Honorable Members of the Finance Committee,

My name is Jovina Vales I have worked for the Department of Corrections since 2008. I am a Probation Officer for the Generic Caseload. I supervise offenders with crimes that range from murder to shoplifting.

I am writing to express my strong concerns regarding the safety and well-being of probation officers, a profession that I believe is inherently dangerous due to the nature of our work.

Probation officers interact with individuals who have a history of criminal activity, often including those who have committed violent crimes, have substance abuse issues, or struggle with mental health challenges. These interactions can be volatile and unpredictable, and the possibility of escalating situations and facing verbal or physical threats is a daily reality.

While I recognize that not every interaction is inherently dangerous, the cumulative effect of these potentially hazardous encounters creates a high level of risk for probation officers. We face a constant barrage of emotional and psychological strain, which can have a negative impact on our physical and mental health.

The challenges we face are further compounded by the lack of resources, understaffed agencies, and bureaucratic obstacles that hinder our ability to effectively and safely manage cases. This lack of support can leave us feeling vulnerable and exposed to potentially dangerous situations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this serious issue. I hope you will take my concerns into account as you make decisions that allows us to be seen as public safety employees. I would like for the approval of HB 5765.

Sincerely,

Jovina Vales