

Monday 4/21/25

2025-HB 5765-IN FAVOR OF PASSAGE.

Dear House Finance Committee:

I am writing to you to urge passage of 2025 HB-5765. For the past 3 years and 8 months, I have been a Probation and Parole Officer for the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. Before that I was a member of the Rhode Island College Campus Police Department for 13- and one-half years and left there as a Lieutenant. Also, in 2008 I retired from the Providence Police Department as a Detective Sergeant after 21 years.

Frist I would like to say that the Probation and Parole Department is a first-rate organization run and staffed by highly intelligent, knowledgeable, and educated people who do their jobs in a highly professional manner and take their responsibility very seriously.

While we are not first responders answering calls and responding to incidents as they are occurring we are every bit a law enforcement officer as those that do and play an integral part in the justice system. We carry heavy caseloads which include offenders who have committed every crime imaginable and often have very long working relationship with them. We are tasked with making sure they fulfill their responsibilities while on Probation and Parole and are responsible with bringing them before the Court when they do not. Additionally, we often deal with victims of crimes, and other justice system professionals whether it is the Courts, prosecutors or defense counsel. Also, we deal with a myriad of social service agencies. Our jobs also at times bring us out into the field whether it is off site meetings with probationers and parolees or conducting home visits with local police departments. We are present in the various Districts Court daily to represent the department when probationers are brought in on substantive or technical violations of probation. We also conduct presentencing investigations for the Superior Court when requested and must submit detailed reports to them.

The daily functions of Probation and Parole Officers may differ from state to state, with some functioning in a way that would be viewed as more like police officers. Some have arrest powers; some may go out in the community "chasing down" those in violation of the terms of their probation and parole; some carry firearms. These differences boil down to choice, that is the State and Department at this point in time choose to not utilize us that way, but that could change at any time.

The State's criminal justice system could not function properly without its Probation and Parole officers anymore than it could do without its courts, other law enforcement officers or other professionals which make it up.

Passage of this bill would take a big step in treating us Probation and Parole Officers as the professional law enforcement officers that we are and I urge its passage.

Thank you for any consideration given this bill.

Kenneth J. Lopardo

Probation and Parole Officer II