

April 21, 2025

To Whom it may concern:

This letter is in support of identifying that Probation and Parole Officers should be labeled as public safety workers. There are differences between the duties of Deputy Sheriffs, Capitol Police Officers, JPW's, Airport rescue workers and Campus Police Officers. Probation and Parole Officers do not have rigorous training, we do not have full arrest powers, but we most certainly do work in demanding jobs that could lead to higher injury rates. This job as a Probation and Parole Officer is volatile. We are working daily with individuals who struggle with mental health concerns, addictions, oppositional behaviors, defiant behaviors, and criminal addictive thinking patterns all of which could be an explosive situation at any given time.

Unlike the Judiciary staff, DHS workers and BHDDH we as Probation and Parole Officers hold an element of power over the freedom of those individuals on Probation and Parole. There are times when conversations take place that are confrontational and uncomfortable. There are conversations regarding violations, and the idea of their freedom being taken away can become a serious possible violent situation. As Probation and Parole Officers we are expected to hold individuals accountable, we are expected to make sure they are abiding by the conditions set forth by the Judges. Many times, the individuals are not amenable to the conditions and are resistant and oppositional.

At times there are contentious conversations in the office or even in the field with those on Probation or Parole which could create a safety issue.

We as Probation and Parole Officers conduct field work, we enter into the homes of individuals, we enter neighborhoods, we canvass neighborhoods, all which could potentially place anyone at risk. When out in the community in the homes of individuals on Probation or Parole, we are either alone, with a partner or with the Police.

The population that we work with daily can be unpredictable and erratic and unstable. Yet every single one of my co-workers would not hesitate to jump into a situation to help out should there be an altercation. There are verbal altercations that occur weekly, and all staff diffuse the situations without hesitation, without reservation.

Take into account that we as Probation and Parole Officers do not carry OC, or batons, or handcuffs nor do we carry firearms. We have no access to devices to defend ourselves either in our office or out in the community when conducting field work. Things could get out of hand at any moment while dealing with this population.

This environment, this population of individuals can create a climate that could have the propensity to react in a very negative violent way, and with that, we as Probation and Parole Officers should be considered public safety workers.

Thank you kindly,

Lori Rizzo-Caruso

Probation Officer