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RE: H7685

Dear Chairman of the Finance committee,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support in recognizing the critical role of **Probation and Parole Officers and Supervisors** in Rhode Island's criminal justice system by formally classifying us as '*public safety personnel*' under state law and policy.

In 2025, Probation and Parole Officers and Supervisors in Rhode Island were tasked with supervising over 16,000 individuals in your communities who have been convicted of crimes and are serving sentences outside of incarceration, in addition to over 300 parolees.

We work directly in your communities everyday, often under challenging and potentially dangerous conditions. Our roles often place us side-by-side with law enforcement on the front lines - yet we are not afforded the same recognition, protections or benefits.

We play a vital role in protecting the public's safety by ensuring compliance with court orders, monitoring behavior, coordinating treatment and rehabilitation services, and intervening when necessary to promote rehabilitation and reduce recidivism. Probation Officers go above and beyond every day for the Department of Corrections, our Probationers, and the taxpayers of the state.

Despite being essential to the safety and rehabilitation efforts in our state, Probation and Parole Officers and Supervisors are not currently classified as "public safety" personnel in Rhode Island statutes.

This misclassification impacts access to fair compensation, retirement benefits, essential training, equipment, and our ability to respond effectively in high-risk situations. In short, it hinders our ability to do our job safely and effectively—while also undervaluing the important public safety function we serve.

In CY 2025 Rhode Island ranked 2nd highest in the nation for number of individuals on probation and parole. These supervision numbers put enormous demands on officers and supervisors, yet current designations and protections do not reflect the level of responsibility or risk.

Our work is critical to reducing recidivism, supporting rehabilitation, and ensuring public safety across the state. Thus, I respectfully urge you to support legislation that would formally designate Probation and Parole Officers and Supervisors in Rhode Island as public safety personnel, ensuring we receive the recognition, support, and protections we rightfully deserve.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your ongoing support for public safety in Rhode Island.

Respectfully,

Jennifer Spellman, Probation and Parole Officer II