

May 14, 2026

Finance Committee
Senate Finance - State House
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Respected Members of Senate Finance Committee,

I am writing to respectfully urge your support for **Senate Bill S-2446**, which would allow **Rhode Island Probation and Parole Officers & Supervisors** to be considered for MERS benefits.

The State of Rhode Island has the second highest rate of individuals on community supervision in the country. Probation and Parole officers manage this population with professionalism, skill and dedication, and do so on only 7% of the total budget allotted to the RIDOC. We work daily to assist the population we serve to make better choices and interrupt behavior cycles they have developed over time. The goal is recidivism reduction and increased community safety. Your community and mine. Since 2012 the number of individuals supervised by our department has decreased by 34%, numbers that demonstrate the dedication and professionalism of probation and parole officers. I have been an officer since 2013, working mostly with convicted sexual offenders.

We collaborate with community agencies, local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, defendants and their families to ensure improved outcomes and goal achievement. We achieve success through home and community visits, aligning our supervision strategies and focusing more intense supervision on higher risk populations. We provide the skills, tools, and opportunities to successfully re-integrate into society.

The individuals we supervise have been convicted of serious and violent crimes. Offenders pose a significant risk to our safety. Armed with the power of the pen, we conduct field visits to homes and communities to uncontrolled environments that include drugs, weapons and other illicit activities. ** Most often we are accompanied by other staff. Frequently, we stand shoulder to shoulder with the other professionals covered by the MERS: armed local and state law enforcement, also federal probation and parole officers and the US Marshall service. While armed officers offer a sense of protection, the fact is their presence increases our risk.

The population we supervise have committed a variety of crimes from disorderly conduct to robbery, rape, physical assault and murder. On the day they are released from prison to parole, the same inmate classified as a high security risk for gang affiliations, is transported to the parole unit and receives a home visit a few days later. The parole officer cannot control the environment or who is in the home. Juvenile officers face similar or increased risks due to basic biological factors. Juvenile brains do not reach maturity until age 25 which contributes to impulsiveness, lack of reasoning and poor decision making.

Senate Bill S-02446 would provide long-needed recognition of these challenges and align our retirement benefits with other public safety professionals, such as law enforcement and correctional officers, who are rightfully acknowledged for the similar demands of their roles.

I urge you to support **Senate Bill S-02446** and advocate for those of us who serve on the front lines of justice and rehabilitation every day.

Thank you,

Tracy LaPointe Webber

Probation and Parole Officer

