

# Probation officers' pay below NYPD, Correx Dept.: union prez



Probation Commissioner Juanita Holmes (pictured) is defended by United Probation Officers Association prez. Theodore Parisienne for New York Daily news

BY GRAHAM RAYMAN NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

New York City probation officers — a workforce largely made up of women of color — make far less money than cops and correction officers and haven't had a new contract since 2020, their union president told the Daily News.

The years-old pay disparity, which the union has alleged results from its racial and gender makeup, is in sharper focus as current Probation Commissioner Juanita Holmes has placed the agency on more of a law enforcement footing.

Most probation officers start at \$45,934 a year and top out at \$58,242 after 11 years. The salary of 11-year probation officers is less than the starting pay for

NYPD officers, who start their careers with annual pay of \$58,580.

Police officer pay tops out after five years at \$121,589, not including overtime. Correction officers start at \$47,857 and top out after five years at \$92,073, not including overtime.

There's no five-year maximum salary provision for probation officers, said Dalvanie Powell, president of the United Probation Officers Association.

"We're underappreciated, undervalued and misunderstood," Powell said. "You can't live in New York City off that, so the attrition rate is very high."

Probation officers also earn far less overtime, on average, than cops and correction officers, city payroll records show.

Years of staff cuts have chipped away at the workforce. Under Mayor Mike Bloomberg, Powell said, there were close to 1,500 probation officers. Today, there are fewer than 700.

In 2019, there were 633 active probation officers, with 505 in 2023 — a drop of 20%, city payroll records show.

City payroll records show 524 probation officers left the agency from 2020 through 2023 — 77% more than the 296 who left in the three years from 2016 through 2019.

Powell said it's not uncommon for officers to go through the 12-week probation officer training program — which she describes as "wonderful" — and soon leave to another agency. Officers also leave because of a requirement they work weekends, she said.

"Some leave right after the academy or within the first three years," she said. "They call me and say, 'I'm leaving. I don't want to, but I can't do it on the salary.'"

Powell also defended Holmes, who was appointed in March, and has been criticized for canceling funding to two youth mentoring programs, Impact and Next Steps, and cutting the budget of a third, Arches, by \$1 million a year.

City Council members and advocates expressed high regard for the programs at hearings in March and September.

"I had never heard of those programs," Powell said. "Being a woman in authority, especially a person of color, it seems like we're more criticized. Every step we make is constantly criticized. She just got here. Some people have a problem with change. They call news reporters. She hasn't had a chance."

Powell said contract negotiations with the city are ongoing. The last contract was ratified in 2019 and expired in 2020, she said.

Officials with the city Office of Labor Relations and the Probation Department did not respond to written requests for comment.