



UNITED PROBATION OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

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Testimony of
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NYC Council Committee On Criminal Justice
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Good morning, Chair Carolina Rivera, and members of the Committee.

I am the President of the United Probation Officers Association. I want to thank the Committee for affording me, on behalf of the members of the United Probation Officers Association, ("UPOA"), the opportunity to address the important issue of the future of Criminal Justice in the City of New York and the importance of resourcing the vital work of Probation as you prepare your recommendations for next fiscal year's budget.

Currently there are approximately 759 probation officers and supervising probation officers. Most of these members are women and people of color. Prior to the Bloomberg administration there were approximately 1,550 probation officers. Over the last few years, the Department of Probation staffing has been reduced almost in half while the workload has been increased, in part, because of bail reform and the Raise the Age program that increased the number of our clients and placed on our shoulders the challenges facing law enforcement in the 21st century. To perform our increased duties and responsibilities we need help and adequate resources to match these responsibilities.

Instead, these women and people of color on the frontlines of the movement to improve criminal justice are underpaid and undervalued. Because of this the Department of Probation has issues with retention and recruitment. Our members are leaving to get hired into higher paying positions in criminal justice. While we

recently had a civil service examination for Probation Officers in July 2022 and Supervising Probation Officers in May 2021, there has not been a civil service examination for Administrative Probation Officers since 2007. In addition, the Senior Probation Officer title has not been used in years and attempts have been to do away with said title. This does not speak well for advancement in a career path. Our salaries are the lowest in the metropolitan area for Probation Officers, which includes Nassau, Suffolk Counties and Westchester County. We do the same work as the Probation Officers in these nearby jurisdictions at higher volumes and are paid pennies to every dollar they earn.

We have been asked to do more with less staff. To do more we need to find ways to be more efficient and productive and we need more training and better equipment.

In addition, we are charged by the City to oversee approximately 15,000 men, women and youth who have been convicted of a crimes and sentenced to probation instead of jail, prison and placement. Thereby saving the city and state millions of dollars for each. We are responsible for making sure they do not violate the terms of their probation and work them to turn their lives around and with that is a cost savings to city and state.

Our members have bachelor's and master's degrees and education experience in social work to help our clients begin to live productive and lawful lives.

Our members are Peace Officers. My members are part of task forces with other agencies such as the U.S. Marshals, Drug Enforcement Agency, the NYPD and other law enforcement agencies. We carry firearms, make arrests and execute search and arrest warrants. We need to be designated as police officers, especially since we do the same work as the police and face the same dangers. Yet our compensation lags far behind other law enforcement agencies even though we work with the same populations.

Although there is a salary range for our title the majority of our members are suppressed at the lower end of the range with almost no opportunity to earn more

nor does our members never reach the top salary for our title like other peace officers.

In addition dozens of our members are even earning below contractual wage rates, something we have asked the City to address immediately, but which the City has ignored.

We have had to bring affirmative litigation to address these issues. We should not have to bring litigation to get the City to end its practice of pay disparity and job segregation in the municipal workforce. Everyone will admit this is a problem and that it needs to end, I hope that this body will insist that Probation is given the funding to address this and that that funding is expressly earmarked to equalize pay for women and people of color in the Department to ensure it reaches that intended goal.

We have begun to discuss with the Adams' administration some of these areas. Now we hope with our newly appointed Commissioner Juanita Holms we begin to see changes in the above-mentioned.

Because of the shortness of time allocated for the Department of Probation, I request that we meet with representatives of this committee to present a more in-depth picture and plans on how to enhance and adjust the work of the probation officers and our supervisors and the costs and funding for the needed changes.

Thank you.

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have now. Otherwise, I look forward to meeting with your representatives.