

March 24, 2025

To the Honorable Legislators in the Pension Committee:

PLEASE SUPPORT HF 1779/SF1986 REASONABLE RETIREMENT!

My name is Latonya Reeves, President of AFSCME Local 552 and I have been a probation officer with Hennepin County for the last 10 years. In that role, I have seen probation officers become burned out from the significant level of stress and secondary trauma experienced through working with probation clientele. They experience some of the most significant trauma and have the highest needs, which can be felt by probation officers as they work in community with family, stakeholders and the public to address risk and needs of these clients.

Studies show that retiring at 60 years of age or after 35 years of employment can significantly reduce stress, improve mental and physical health, and provide workers the opportunity to retire with dignity. Due to the significant secondary trauma that is experienced by probation officers, it is imperative that agents can assess their situation closer to retirement and determine what is best for them and their family. This choice will allow probation agents coming into the field the opportunity to know that with all of stress this job produces, their hard work will be acknowledged in the form of a choice: retire early and allow the next generation to be successful in their careers or continue working as appropriate.

With the nature of the work that we do, I would not want 70-year-old field agents chasing down people that may have a warrant for their arrest. Our job is to maintain public safety, client safety and victim safety. Law Enforcement can retire at 55 due to the nature of their work and federal probation officers are required to retire at 57. They can also retire at the age of 50 with 20 years of hazardous duty service or at any age with 25 years of service.

When probation officers can retire after a long and fulfilling career, it allows for a more productive, engaged workforce in the interim, as employees are not overworked or facing burnout. This can enhance workplace morale, as it creates a clear, positive outlook on retirement. I am asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Latonya Reeves

President, AFSCME Local 552

Probation/Parole-Hennepin County

Lreeves.afscmelocal552@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern:

Here are my thoughts on why the 35/60 with full pension benefits should be approved. I have worked for Hennepin County for over 23 years. I work in the felony Presentence Investigation/Criminal Records Summary (CRS) Units. Myself and other Probation Officers provide comprehensive/detailed investigations including explaining our clients criminal history to the court, attorneys, supervising Probation Officers in Minnesota and other states at times, Department of Corrections, chemical dependency, and mental health providers about the clients we investigate. Our investigations are greatly appreciated by all the Criminal Justice partners we work with and it appears to help them understand and work with the clients to help them make adjustments in their lives so they could work on prosocially changing or take large stepping on moving towards prosocial change.

This job is extremely rewarding because we are getting our clients motivated on changing. Our jobs are stressful because we get pulled in a lot of different directions and/or have to change professional hats at times to get the prosocial change from our clients. It would be beneficial for Probation Officers to retire at 60 with full pension benefits because it could relieve us from the stress and avoid possible mental health problems we could deal with if we were required to work longer. Additionally, allowing Probation Officers to retire at 60, could give counties more opportunities to hire younger Probation Officers.

Jejuan Webb, MA

Subject: Support of **SF1986/HF1779**

To: Minnesota Legislature

From: Alistair Nairn, Career Probation Officer

I am writing this letter in support of Bill SF1986/HF1779. I have been a correctional professional for over 15 years and at this point, expect to retire from this job. I began my career during the very bottom of the economic downturn in 2009, and as such, I have, as many of my peers, had to negotiate “starting from behind” previous generations. Because of the wage freezes and budgetary issues at the beginning of my career, I delayed buying a home, starting a family, and putting down roots until I was in my mid-30s. I desperately hope that I do not have to work until I am no longer physically able to enjoy my retirement or perform my basic job functions, but the opposition to sensible, compassionate, and equitable retirement benefits is confusing and disconcerting.

I am a strong believer of the philosophy of “a rising tide raises all ships,” and indeed, I entered the field of Corrections to provide support and benefits to people who have not had the privileges and advantages that I have. Although I will personally benefit from the bill, if passed, I would support it even if I would not. I do not believe it is in the interests of the State, the employer, correctional clients, my colleagues, or even public safety in general to require probation officers to work until the age of Social Security retirement. This is a complicated, difficult, and at times, dangerous job. It requires patience, good judgement, quick thinking, and compassion. By ensuring that correctional professionals can retire earlier in life, I believe we will attract high quality talent to the field and retain them until they retire at an age where they are still highly capable, energetic, and healthy. I support this bill and respectfully urge you and your colleagues to see this as an opportunity to make a long-term investment in public safety and correctional professionals.

Sincerely,

Alistair Nairn, MA

Career Probation Officer

ASFCME Council 5 – Local 552

03/24/2025

Hello,

I am writing to show my support for the 60/35 retirement option for probation officers. Allowing, hard-working, dedicated, and professional probation officers the option to retire at age 60, or after thirty-five years of service, would be very much appreciated and essential. It is a privilege to work as a probation officer and to have the opportunity to serve our community and our clients. It is amazing to see when our clients succeed and become productive members of our communities. However, this work can be very challenging leading to burn out, low morale, safety concerns, and decreased productivity. This can result in poor working relationships with our clients and the community and does not result in positive outcomes for our clients. It is in the best interest of both probation officer and client to enact the 60/35 retirement option.

Thank you!

Luke J. Fiore

Career Probation Officer, Traditional Probation Unit

Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation

Office: 612-596-2105 | Mobile: 612-388-8470

luke.fiore@hennepin.us | hennepin.us/corrections

Hennepin County Government Center

300 South 6th St, MC032

Minneapolis, MN 55487

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to offer my support of the 35/60 legislation that is currently being considered for probation related work within community corrections, and supervisors in those areas as well. I have worked in the department for almost 28 years, with many more years to go, based on currently retirement factors. We work in a high-risk environment, particularly providing field related services in the community utilizing accredited risk assessments, case planning and consistently managing high caseloads. There is always and will be a concern for the safety of our agents and the ability to perform at a high-level of efficiency. Burn-out, aging workforce and adaptability to new technology are just some of the examples that come to mind in factors that may impact community and agent safety. By providing the opportunity of a retirement plan that supports and shows appreciation to the work and time that an agent/supervisor has put in while being exposed to an ever-changing workload and population, ensures a healthier and thriving workforce that impacts the community as a whole and moves our vision and mission in the right direction.

Respectfully,

Jahmal Mattson

Dear Representatives,

My name is Laura Vukelich and I am currently a supervisor with Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation. I supervise a unit of 10 probation officers who are responsible for a large number of different functions in adult probation, including writing domestic pre-sentence investigation reports and completing intake on all recently sentenced to probation cases. They are often upset, scared, angry and hostile. We still show up. We make a difference in how their probation trajectory begins. It's not always easy, but we're here. We treat each individual as a person who deserves respect and dignity, regardless of the offense they were just convicted of.

My husband and I are raising two little boys in Maple Grove and live in a middle-class home. We are financially stable, but it's important to me to be able to retire after 35 years of service or 60 years of age because I want to be able to enjoy life outside of the criminal justice system. Family is the reason that I do what I do. I want to take part in making our communities safer for our future generations, and IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT I GET TO REAP THAT BENEFIT after 35 years of service.

I support the proposed 35/60 retirement bill and you should too!!

Thank you,

Laura Vukelich

To the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I've only been a probation officer in the public sector for two years, and already I deeply feel the impact of the secondhand trauma and negative stress that comes with this type of work. Within my corrections department, which is quite large, probation agents have wide-ranging job obligations and duties, including client contacts that frequently place us at risk, such as conducting community and home visits, performing searches, and conducting arrests.

We work alongside various client collaterals and justice partners, including their families, partners, and victims, treatment and other governmental agencies, such as Child Protection, law enforcement, attorneys and judges, and the Minnesota Department of Corrections. We regularly read the most graphic of charges and offense descriptions, assist police with the most serious of criminal investigations, and review horrific evidence, files, photos, and videos. We share in the retelling of victim experiences and the impact our client's conduct has had on them – some of which lasts for a lifetime. We experience harassment and various forms of threatening, aggressive behavior from clients and others in the community. I personally have experienced sexual harassment and have been physically attacked/assaulted on more than one occasion for reasons I'll never understand. My colleagues have also been threatened with weapons, have been exposed to gunfire and sexual misconduct, have been assaulted, and have experienced carjackings.

No amount of training or time on the job can prepare someone for these experiences, nor the emotional and psychological toll such work can take on us. As probation agents, we're placed alongside the highest risk offenders and clients, in some of the communities most vulnerable and at-risk in our state. Our work requires us to bear witness to extreme suffering, desperation and anger, grief, shame. We work with clients intensively to overcome their traumas, lack of access to resources, and generational barriers, to help them make real and long-lasting positive change. We shed tears with clients as they recount their biggest secrets and most painful experiences, and we beam with pride when they reunite with their families, when they graduate from services, when they acquire sobriety. We routinely make difficult decisions about clients we have worked to build rapport with, sometimes for years at a time, including about whether they ultimately should go to prison. We then appear in court with them and their families, and we watch as they sometimes lose their freedom, generally at our recommendation. The weight of such hearings cannot be overlooked, as we are present for arguably one of their worst days, and we comfort their families in the aftermath.

With this information, I am therefore asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carley Notch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carley Notch

Senior Probation/Parole Officer

AFSCME Local 552

I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I have been a Probation Officer for thirteen years. I am passionate about what I do and look forward to coming to work every day. However, the trauma experienced first, and second hand are very real. When I first started as a Probation Officer working with high risk, violent juvenile offenders, in a maximum secure placement, i was exposed to evils of the world that I knew existed, but didn't know the impact it would have on me. I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder within my first eighteen months of my career, something that I have never experienced prior. The mental stress of my job began impacting all areas of my life, including the most important, my family. No amount of training or time on the job can prepare someone for these experiences, nor the emotional and psychological toll such work can take on us. Unfortunately, my story is not uncommon.

With this information, I am therefore asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your time.

Jenna Williams

Probation/Parole Officer

AFSCME Local 552

3/24/25

To the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I have been working for 25 years plus as a probation officer spending most of my time supervising a high-risk caseload.

Throughout the years I have experienced trauma firsthand and regularly been exposed secondhand. I remain passionate about my job but as time goes on, I feel the effects. The population we serve is complex, with many needs. We tirelessly work to provide resources and assist clients with much needed support while also dealing with behaviors that come along with individuals struggling with mental health and chemical health. Balancing the client needs while also protecting public safety is stressful and that stress can be disruptive to our personal lives as it is not easy to turn off as we are dealing with real events, concerns and people.

I am asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deborah Toren', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Deborah Toren
Career Probation Officer
AFSCME Local 552

Honorable Members of the Legislature:

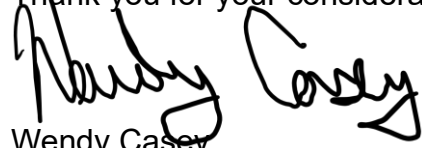
I am writing you today to urge you to support the **60/35 Probation Officer Reasonable Retirement H.F. No 1779/SF 1986** bill.

I became a Probation Officer in Hennepin County in March of 1994; therefore, I am beginning my 31st year of service. I have worked in various units throughout my career. Currently, I supervise high risk offenders and am required to meet them at their home, in their community and at the office. I will turn 60 years old in November of this year. Although we are trained in defensive tactics, we don't carry firearms, batons or pepper spray and only rely on ourselves to get us out of a dangerous or volatile situation.

Throughout the years, I have noticed a shift of more dangerous offenders being placed on probation rather than being sentenced to prison. These offenders often suffer from chronic chemical dependency/alcoholism and/or mental health illnesses. These individuals can be unpredictable along with their roommates and family members with whom they reside. You must always remain vigilant during these visits and aware of your surroundings. I believe as we age, we don't move as quickly as our younger counterparts, nor do we have the same stamina. I worry for myself and my other aging co-workers being out in the field. Will it take for someone to be severely injured or killed before things will change? I certainly hope not.

I am therefore, asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies, surrounding states or police officers who are all allowed to retire at a reasonable age. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you for your consideration and support!!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Casey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Casey
Career Probation Officer-Hennepin County
AFSCME Local 552

Dear Honorable Community Chair,

I am writing to express my strong support for establishing a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers. Probation officers play a critical role in our justice system, balancing public safety with rehabilitation efforts, often under difficult and stressful conditions. A fair and reasonable retirement system is essential to retaining experienced officers, maintaining workforce stability, and ensuring the continued effectiveness of community supervision programs.

Reasons to Support 60/35 Retirement for Probation Officers:

- **Retention and Recruitment:** A competitive retirement plan will help retain experienced officers while attracting new professionals to this demanding field.
- **Physical and Mental Well-being:** Probation work is emotionally and physically taxing, often requiring officers to manage high caseloads, supervise individuals with complex needs, and face safety risks. A reasonable retirement age ensures officers do not work beyond their peak effectiveness.
- **Public Safety:** Retaining knowledgeable and skilled probation officers directly impacts public safety, as they play a key role in reducing recidivism and ensuring successful reintegration into society.
- **Parity with Other Law Enforcement Professions:** Many law enforcement and first responder roles already have structured retirement benefits due to the high demands of their work. Probation officers should receive similar considerations.
- **Workforce Stability:** A structured retirement system allows agencies to plan for leadership transitions, mentorship, and knowledge transfer, ensuring a well-prepared and effective probation workforce.

I urge you to support legislation or policy changes that would implement a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers. This initiative will help maintain a strong, professional, and dedicated workforce that ultimately benefits public safety and community well-being.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Berton Olson

Career Probation Officer, AFSME Local 552

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Michelle Cornell. I am 31 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since 2018. I supervise High Risk Intimate Partner Violence clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent and traumatic situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

Why a 60/35 Retirement Plan is Necessary:

- **Retention and Recruitment:** A competitive retirement system is essential for attracting and keeping qualified probation officers, ensuring a stable and experienced workforce.
- **Public Safety Impact:** Probation officers manage high-risk caseloads, supervise individuals on release, and work to reduce recidivism. Burnout and high turnover rates threaten the effectiveness of these efforts.
- **Physical and Mental Toll of the Job:** Officers frequently encounter volatile situations, high stress, and secondary trauma. Unlike desk-based state employees, probation officers face safety risks daily.
- **Parity with Other Law Enforcement Roles:** Many law enforcement professionals, including police and corrections officers, already benefit from structured retirement plans. Probation officers, who share similar responsibilities, deserve comparable benefits.
- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.
- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Michelle Cornell

Senior Probation Officer - Hennepin County

Michelle.Cornell22@gmail.com

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Rita Mwele. I am 44 years old and I have been a probation agency employee for the last 2 and half years. I work with high risk probation clients, where I conduct home and community visits. Though I have been fortunate enough at this time not to find myself in a violent situation in the community, it is only a matter of time before it may come along.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

Why a 60/35 Retirement Plan is Necessary:

- **Retention and Recruitment:** A competitive retirement system is essential for attracting and keeping qualified probation officers, ensuring a stable and experienced workforce.
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- **Parity with Other Law Enforcement Roles:** Many law enforcement professionals, including police and corrections officers, already benefit from structured retirement plans. Probation officers, who share similar responsibilities, deserve comparable benefits.
- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.
- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rita Mwele

Senior Probation Officer Hennepin County

Ritamwele77@yahoo.com

To the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I've only been a probation officer in the public sector for about ten years, and already I deeply feel the impact of the secondhand trauma and negative stress that comes with this type of work. Within my corrections department, which is quite large, probation agents have wide-ranging job obligations and duties, including client contacts that frequently place us at risk, such as conducting community and home visits, performing searches, and conducting arrests. We work alongside various client collaterals and justice partners, including their families, partners, and victims, treatment and other governmental agencies, such as Child Protection, law enforcement, attorneys and judges, and the Minnesota Department of Corrections. We regularly read the most graphic of charges and offense descriptions, assist police with the most serious of criminal investigations, and review horrific evidence, files, photos, and videos. We share in the retelling of victim experiences and the impact our client's conduct has had on them – some of which lasts for a lifetime. We experience harassment and various forms of threatening, aggressive behavior from clients and others in the community. I personally have experienced sexual harassment, and I've been on the verge of physical attack from clients on multiple occasions, for a variety of reasons. My colleagues have been threatened, including with weapons, have been exposed to gunfire and sexual misconduct, have been assaulted, and have experienced carjackings. One of my closest colleagues encountered random gun violence while conducting home visits in broad daylight, and she was the initial call to 911 after finding a male nearby who had been shot; she stayed by this stranger's side as he took his last breaths on the ground in Minneapolis.

No amount of training or time on the job can prepare someone for these experiences, nor the emotional and psychological toll such work can take on us. As probation agents, we're placed alongside the highest risk offenders and clients, in some of the communities most vulnerable and at-risk in our state. Our work requires us to bear witness to extreme suffering, desperation and anger, grief, shame. We work with clients intensively to overcome their traumas, lack of access to resources, and generational barriers, to help them make real and long-lasting positive change. We shed tears with clients as they recount their biggest secrets and most painful experiences, and we beam with pride when they reunite with their families, when they graduate from services, when they acquire sobriety. We routinely make difficult decisions about clients we have worked to build rapport with, sometimes for years at a time, including about whether they ultimately should go to prison. We then appear in court with them and their families, and we watch as they sometimes lose their freedom, generally at our recommendation.

The weight of such hearings cannot be overlooked, as we are present for arguably one of their worst days, and we comfort their families in the aftermath.

With this information, I am therefore asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and larger than the others.

Sarah Gonzalez
Probation/Parole Officer
AFSCME Local 552

My name is Melissa Chesak, I am a Supervised Release Agent, a member of Local 552 and am reaching out in support of S.F. NO 1986.

I started working in Community Corrections for Hennepin County in 2005 and have been a supervising officer since 2007. I began working in probation with a targeted caseload of sexual offenders in 2011 and transferred over to parole in 2019 while supervising the same type of caseload. For over 14 years I have worked specifically with clients who harm sexually. My role requires me to meet with these individuals on at least a monthly basis in the office, community and/or in their homes. The majority of the time these visits and meetings are conducted solo as our caseloads tend to be 10-15 people over then what they should be to effectively supervise. I have been one of the fortunate ones that has never been assaulted, car-jacked, attacked by a dog, or had a gun pointed at me, but I have many co-workers who have. Like law enforcement officers, we are forced to go into the community where there is a need to deescalate a situation with a client who is mentally unstable, volatile, and violent. The difference is we are not allowed a weapon for protection.

As I said, I may not have suffered any of the physical hazards of this job but the mental aspect is just as difficult. For 14 years I have read the most heinous of complaints, dealt with the most deviant sexual offenders and placed myself in situations that were extremely high-risk. I know I chose this line of work and I have done so because I believe in the work that I do and that people can be rehabilitated and be productive law abiding citizens. However, over a decade (and counting as I would have at least 12 more years in this profession if 60/35 passes) of being threatened, intimidated, cyberstalked, harassed and fearing for my safety and the safety of my family, it has taken a toll on my well-being and mental health and from what I have heard, my co-workers feel the same.

I understand the application for reduced retirement until 2028 will not benefit everyone who contributes. However, it will benefit the masses; the ones who still have significant amounts of time left, dedicating themselves to a rewarding career that is also very mentally, physically and emotionally draining. Because years in this profession allows for psychological and physical risk and trauma, supporting a retirement age that can minimize burnout is in the best interest for all agents and public safety. With that being said, I support paying in more than my older co-workers as I know it will be a continued and worthwhile benefit.

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Anthony Comer I am 42 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since I was 39 years old. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

Why a 60/35 Retirement Plan is Necessary:

- **Retention and Recruitment:** A competitive retirement system is essential for attracting and keeping qualified probation officers, ensuring a stable and experienced workforce.
- **Public Safety Impact:** Probation officers manage high-risk caseloads, supervise individuals on release, and work to reduce recidivism. Burnout and high turnover rates threaten the effectiveness of these efforts.
- **Physical and Mental Toll of the Job:** Officers frequently encounter volatile situations, high stress, and secondary trauma. Unlike desk-based state employees, probation officers face safety risks daily.
- **Parity with Other Law Enforcement Roles:** Many law enforcement professionals, including police and corrections officers, already benefit from structured retirement plans. Probation officers, who share similar responsibilities, deserve comparable benefits.
- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.
- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a 60/35 retirement option for probation officers. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anthony Comer, Senior Probation Officer - Hennepin County --- acomer83@yahoo.com

Good afternoon,

I am writing to respectfully ask for your support for the 60/35 Reasonable Retirement For Probation, Parole and Supervised Release Officers. I began working for Hennepin County in 2018, when I was 22 years old. The work of a probation officer is taxing on our mental health with secondary (and risk of primary) trauma, and high stress having to constantly look out for the safety of myself, my colleagues, my clients, and the community. I do this job because I care deeply about the balance of justice and safety, reducing recidivism and disparities, and making our community safer. I want to spend my entire career working in probation, but doing this work well into my 60's seems incomprehensible. This bill would allow probation officers to retire at a reasonable age and a comparable age to many other states.

I appreciate your time and consideration. I hope we can count on your support this legislative session.

Thank you,
Markell Jurek

Honorable Members of the Legislature,

Thank you for granting me the opportunity to speak today on behalf of probation officers across our state. I urge you to support the bill **60/35 Probation Officer Reasonable Retirement H.F. No 1779/SF 1986** which is a crucial measure that will allow probation officers to retire at age 60 with full benefits. This bill is not just about fairness, it is about public safety, workforce efficiency, and financial responsibility.

I started my career with the department of community corrections in Hennepin County on April 30, 1997. Next month will be my 28th year.

I am also a veteran having served in the Minnesota National Guard as a Military Police Officer in the 34th MP Company from May of 1990 to June of 2000 and from June of 2000 I served 10 more years with the Air National Guard in the 133rd Security Forces Squadron and I retired honorably in June of 2010.

My career as a Probation Officer started in the Investigations division, where I worked for 5 years on the overnight shift on weekends and Holidays. I later transferred to Supervision division where I worked in Mental Health Court supervising Mentally Ill and chemically dependent probationers for the next 3 years. I met with clients oftentimes daily ensuring they were taking their medications and complying with conditions. Over the course of my career, I have worked in Mental Health Court supervising probationers with co-occurring disorders, I have supervised High Volume Low Risk clients in upwards of 400 probationers, and I currently supervise high offenders that have transferred to Hennepin County from other Counties and other States.

Every week I go into the community most of the time alone and without all of the tools a Police Officer has access to. The main tool of my trade is my experience and my wits. I don't have back up; I don't carry the same gear a Police Officer does. We don't carry guns, but we do have to take a defensive tactics training that includes learning how to take a gun or a knife from someone. So, we are expected to go into communities where we could be shot, stabbed or assaulted and our only line of defense is our wits, our cell phone and how fast we be able to run a way. We deal with the same people that Police Officers deal with Federal Probation Officers deal with yet we are expected to work on average 15 years longer than our counterparts.

The life expectancy of law enforcement and veterans is significantly less than the national average. I retired from the Military 15 years ago and for good reason, I physically cannot do the things I once did. We face many of the same risks and the physical demands as Police Officers and the same risks as Federal Probation Officers.

Last Spring I was assigned a new Probationer who was 17, who had put a gun to a victim's head and threatened to kill the individual if he did not give him all his money as he was taking money out of an ATM. He didn't go to Prison. He got probation. A few months after I received the case, he turned 18. Later this past summer around August I received information from one of our neighborhood agents who specializes in gangs.

He found a recent YouTube video that clearly showed my client along with 6 other associates of his all displaying Glock 9mm handguns with extended magazines. At this point and time, I have been to this person's home a few times and have met with him one on one in the community several times alone.

With this new information I submitted a search request which was later approved and our search team along with Law enforcement performed a search of his residence after detaining him. Within about 5 min into the search a Glock 9mm with an extended magazine and a switch (a switch makes the weapon automatic) was found. The search team froze the scene and then law enforcement took over from there. My client was taken into custody and later released because he was not the only person at the residence at the time. Another family member was there so the weapon was sent to the BCA for fingerprint and DNA analysis which takes months. He was released from jail shortly thereafter with no charges. You would think that this would put fear into him because a Felony in Poss is an automatic 5-year sentence. Well, it didn't. Two weeks later him along with 5 other gang members were arrested and charged with armed robbery and attempted murder. He is currently in custody while his case is pending.

The reason I tell this story is that there are many Probationers have become much more brazen, cold calculated and dangerous and our job as Probation Officers is to continue to meet with them even though the risk is there. Again, we do not have back-up, we do have guns like Federal Probation and the Police, yet we often face the same danger and risk they do and often alone.

Just because we have laws on the books that like the Felon in Possession law which is a mandatory minimum of 5 years. Not everyone who is convicted of this goes to prison and serves the 5-year sentence. In fact, I have personally supervised dozens of cases in which they are placed on probation instead.

I go into the most dangerous parts of the city every week, alone, and without the tools that the Police have at their disposal and every week I am hypervigilant because all I really have are my wits. Ask me if my job is stressful.

I don't like going on vacation as many don't for fear of one of our probationer's commits a serious crime. No one monitors our caseloads while we are on vacation and above all we fear one of our probationers commits a serious crime and there are innocent victims involved.

The Reality of a Probation Officer's Job

Probation officers are the bridge between the justice system and rehabilitation. We monitor offenders, conduct home visits in dangerous neighborhoods, and make life-altering decisions regarding probation & parole violations. We handle high caseloads,

juggle legal paperwork, and serve as counselors, enforcers, and social workers—all in one role.

But this job comes at a cost. Unlike traditional desk jobs, probation officers face unpredictable risks every day. We work with individuals who may be violent, suffer from addiction, have mental illness, or simply resist supervision. The job requires constant vigilance, quick reflexes, and sound judgment—qualities that naturally decline with age.

Health and Safety Risks of an Aging Workforce

The research is clear: prolonged exposure to high-stress law enforcement roles leads to severe health consequences. Studies indicate that probation officers experience:

- **Higher-than-average rates of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and mental health disorders** due to chronic stress.
- **Increased risk of PTSD and burnout**, leading to impaired decision-making and emotional exhaustion.
- **Slower reaction times and reduced physical capabilities**, making it harder to de-escalate violent situations.

We cannot afford to have officers in their 60s responding to volatile situations that demand peak physical and mental acuity. The safety of agents and the safety of the communities they serve—depend on it.

The Cost of Keeping Officers Beyond Their Prime

Some may argue that extending the retirement age saves money, but the reality is quite the opposite. An aging workforce results in:

- **Higher healthcare costs and disability claims**, draining state funds.
- **Increased workers' compensation cases** due to injuries sustained in the field.
- **Lower efficiency in managing caseloads**, leading to delays in offender rehabilitation and public safety risks.

By allowing probation officers to retire at 60, we reduce long-term costs, ensure a more effective workforce, and prevent costly health-related absences and retirements due to disability.

Strengthening the Justice System

By passing this bill, we open doors for a new generation of probation officers—individuals trained in modern rehabilitation techniques, digital case management, and evolving public safety strategies. Younger officers bring fresh energy and adaptability,

ensuring that our probation system remains effective, proactive, and responsive to the needs of our communities.

Conclusion: A Matter of Justice and Responsibility

Honorable legislators, we ask probation officers to dedicate their lives to public safety. It is only fair that we grant them the ability to retire with dignity before their physical and mental well-being declines. This bill is not just an investment in their future, it is an investment in a safer, more efficient justice system for all.

I urge you to stand with those who serve. Pass this bill. Give probation officers the retirement security they deserve, while ensuring the safety and effectiveness of our workforce.

Thank you,

Robert J. Wenthe

Career Probation Officer Intra/Interstate High Risk Unit

Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation

Office: 612-543-0241, Cell: 612-327-6834 Fax: 612-321-3829

Robert.Wenthe@hennepin.us | hennepin.us/corrections

Afscme Local 552

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Christopher Ekegren. I am 34 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since I was 22 years old. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

Why a 60/35 Retirement Plan is Necessary:

- **Retention and Recruitment:** A competitive retirement system is essential for attracting and keeping qualified probation officers, ensuring a stable and experienced workforce.
- **Public Safety Impact:** Probation officers manage high-risk caseloads, supervise individuals on release, and work to reduce recidivism. Burnout and high turnover rates threaten the effectiveness of these efforts.
- **Physical and Mental Toll of the Job:** Officers frequently encounter volatile situations, high stress, and secondary trauma. Unlike desk-based state employees, probation officers face safety risks daily.
- **Parity with Other Law Enforcement Roles:** Many law enforcement professionals, including police and corrections officers, already benefit from structured retirement plans. Probation officers, who share similar responsibilities, deserve comparable benefits.
- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.
- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a 60/35 retirement option for probation officers. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Chris Ekegren, Probation/Parole Officer - Rice County

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Amy Barthels. I am 48 years old and I have been a probation officer for 20 years. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a 60/35 retirement option for probation officers. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Amy Barthels Career Probation Officer - Hennepin County

Amybarthels@gmail.com

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Tara Possehl. I am 37 years old and I have been working in community corrections since I was 23 years old. I have been with Hennepin County since 2013, within a community probation role nearly my entirety with Hennepin County. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Tara Possehl

Career Probation Officer - Hennepin County

tara.possehl@yahoo.com

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Marissa Klein. I am 31 years old and I have been a probation agency employee for three years. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.
- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Marissa Klein

Probation Officer - Hennepin County

Marissaklein09@gmail.com

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Samantha Nyenhuis. I am 30 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since I was 22 years old. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role. I have been shot at and threatened. I have witnessed homicides, shootings, and violent assaults. I have read criminal complaints and worked on cases involving horrific violent crimes.

I spend several hours every six months trying to take my personal information off public information websites to avoid clients being able to access my home address and family's information. I have had to come up with a code word for my family to say in public if we encounter a client from my line of work so they can remove themselves from the situation and not be seen with me. I have had to contact loved ones during intense situations to ensure my dogs would be taken care of should I not make it home. I struggle with chronic health issues, mental health issues, and burnout as a result of chronic work-related stress. Probation officers are placed in stressful, dangerous situations on a daily basis with virtually no way to defend themselves. The effect of chronic high stress on the human body has been extensively studied and shown to shorten life expectancies.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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- **Long-term Workforce Stability:** Implementing a clear retirement pathway allows for better workforce planning, mentorship, and succession strategies within probation departments.

- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Samantha Nyenhuis

Career Probation Officer - Hennepin County

sam.nyenhuis@gmail.com

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Cara Wilson. I am 38 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since I was 25 years old. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a 60/35 retirement plan for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a 60/35 retirement option for probation officers. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Cara Wilsom

Career Probation Officer - Hennepin County

Elanc86@yahoo.com

TO: Honorable Members of the Legislature

FROM: Renee Louck

DATE: March 23, 2025

RE: HF-1779

Dear Honorable Member of the Legislature,

I am writing to request your support for HF-1779, a measure that will allow probation officers to retire at age 60 with full benefits. I have been employed as a Probation Officer since 1987. While this bill may result in minimal personal benefit or cost to me, I believe it will benefit the profession by enhancing public safety, workforce efficiency, and financial responsibility.

My work as a Probation Officer is rewarding and challenging. Probation Officers strive to increase public safety by supporting justice-involved clients toward positive change and prosocial adjustment in the community. This process is complex as it involves assessing the dynamic risks and needs of each justice-involved client. While this work is meaningful, it comes with inherent risks and costs. The work frequently involves monitoring clients through home visits in dangerous neighborhoods and make life-altering decisions regarding parole violations. Caseload sizes are high and include juggling legal paperwork, and serving as counselors, enforcers, and social workers—all in one role. Unlike traditional desk jobs, probation officers face unpredictable risks. The clients we work with may be violent, struggle with addiction, or resist supervision efforts. Studies indicate that probation officers experience: Higher-than-average rates of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and mental health disorders due to chronic stress. Further, increased risk of PTSD and burnout, may lead to impaired decision-making and emotional exhaustion. While I know I have benefitted from tending to my physical, emotional, and mental well-being throughout my career, I am also aware that my lengthy time in the profession, and normal effects of aging, may increase my risk of injury.

Allowing probation officers to retire at 60, strengthens the justice system by reducing long-term costs, ensures a more effective workforce, prevents costly health-related absences and retirements due to disability and serves to promote public safety. I urge you to pass this bill - giving probation officers the retirement security they deserve, ensuring the safety and effectiveness of our workforce, and enhancing public safety. Thank you.

Sincerely, Renee Louck

To My Minnesota Legislators,

My name is Emily Fischer. I am 31 years old and I have been a probation agency employee since I was 21 years old. I supervise high risk probation clients, conduct home and community visits, and I have found myself in violent situations due to the nature of my role.

I am writing to urge your support for legislation establishing a **60/35 retirement plan** for probation officers in Minnesota. As you know, probation officers play a critical role in public safety, balancing offender rehabilitation with community protection. However, the demanding and high-stress nature of this profession makes it essential to have a fair and sustainable retirement system that ensures officers can retire at a reasonable age without sacrificing financial stability.

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- **Fully Self Funded:** This is an investment in my health and future. Approval of this bill will put no burdens on the taxpayers of this state.

I respectfully ask you to support legislation that would create a **60/35 retirement option for probation officers**. This policy will help strengthen our justice system, support those who serve on the front lines of rehabilitation and public safety, and ensure long-term workforce stability.

I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss this matter further and provide any additional insights. Please feel free to reach out at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your time and dedication to improving our state's public safety and workforce policies. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Emily Fischer

Career Probation Officer - Hennepin County

efischer021@gmail.com

To Whom It May Concern:

Here are my thoughts on why the 35/60 with full pension benefits should be approved. I have worked for Hennepin County for over 23 years. I work in the felony Presentence Investigation/Criminal Records Summary (CRS) Units. Myself and other Probation Officers provide comprehensive/detailed investigations including explaining our clients criminal history to the court, attorneys, supervising Probation Officers in Minnesota and other states at times, Department of Corrections, chemical dependency, and mental health providers about the clients we investigate. Our investigations are greatly appreciated by all the Criminal Justice partners we work with and it appears to help them understand and work with the clients to help them make adjustments in their lives so they could work on prosocially changing or take large stepping on moving towards prosocial change.

This job is extremely rewarding because we are getting our clients motivated on changing. Our jobs are stressful because we get pulled in a lot of different directions and/or have to change professional hats at times to get the prosocial change from our clients. It would be beneficial for Probation Officers to retire at 60 with full pension benefits because it could relieve us from the stress and avoid possible mental health problems we could deal with if we were required to work longer. Additionally, allowing Probation Officers to retire at 60, could give counties more opportunities to hire younger Probation Officers.

Jejuan Webb, MA

Dear Representatives,

My name is Laura Vukelich and I am currently a supervisor with Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation. I supervise a unit of 10 probation officers who are responsible for a large number of different functions in adult probation, including writing domestic pre-sentence investigation reports and completing intake on all recently sentenced to probation cases. They are often upset, scared, angry and hostile. We still show up. We make a difference in how their probation trajectory begins. It's not always easy, but we're here. We treat each individual as a person who deserves respect and dignity, regardless of the offense they were just convicted of.

My husband and I are raising two little boys in Maple Grove and live in a middle-class home. We are financially stable, but it's important to me to be able to retire after 35 years of service or 60 years of age because I want to be able to enjoy life outside of the criminal justice system. Family is the reason that I do what I do. I want to take part in making our communities safer for our future generations, and IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT I GET TO REAP THAT BENEFIT after 35 years of service.

I support the proposed 35/60 retirement bill and you should too!!

Thank you,

Laura Vukelich

To the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

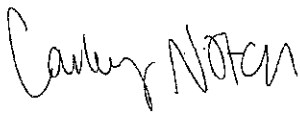
I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I've only been a probation officer in the public sector for two years, and already I deeply feel the impact of the secondhand trauma and negative stress that comes with this type of work. Within my corrections department, which is quite large, probation agents have wide-ranging job obligations and duties, including client contacts that frequently place us at risk, such as conducting community and home visits, performing searches, and conducting arrests.

We work alongside various client collaterals and justice partners, including their families, partners, and victims, treatment and other governmental agencies, such as Child Protection, law enforcement, attorneys and judges, and the Minnesota Department of Corrections. We regularly read the most graphic of charges and offense descriptions, assist police with the most serious of criminal investigations, and review horrific evidence, files, photos, and videos. We share in the retelling of victim experiences and the impact our client's conduct has had on them – some of which lasts for a lifetime. We experience harassment and various forms of threatening, aggressive behavior from clients and others in the community. I personally have experienced sexual harassment and have been physically attacked/assaulted on more than one occasion for reasons I'll never understand. My colleagues have also been threatened with weapons, have been exposed to gunfire and sexual misconduct, have been assaulted, and have experienced carjackings.

No amount of training or time on the job can prepare someone for these experiences, nor the emotional and psychological toll such work can take on us. As probation agents, we're placed alongside the highest risk offenders and clients, in some of the communities most vulnerable and at-risk in our state. Our work requires us to bear witness to extreme suffering, desperation and anger, grief, shame. We work with clients intensively to overcome their traumas, lack of access to resources, and generational barriers, to help them make real and long-lasting positive change. We shed tears with clients as they recount their biggest secrets and most painful experiences, and we beam with pride when they reunite with their families, when they graduate from services, when they acquire sobriety. We routinely make difficult decisions about clients we have worked to build rapport with, sometimes for years at a time, including about whether they ultimately should go to prison. We then appear in court with them and their families, and we watch as they sometimes lose their freedom, generally at our recommendation. The weight of such hearings cannot be overlooked, as we are present for arguably one of their worst days, and we comfort their families in the aftermath.

With this information, I am therefore asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carley Notch".

Carley Notch

Senior Probation/Parole Officer

AFSCME Local 552

I'm writing today to urge you to please support HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for the members of Minnesota's probation workforce. I have been a Probation Officer for thirteen years. I am passionate about what I do and look forward to coming to work every day. However, the trauma experienced first, and second hand are very real. When I first started as a Probation Officer working with high risk, violent juvenile offenders, in a maximum secure placement, i was exposed to evils of the world that I knew existed, but didn't know the impact it would have on me. I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder within my first eighteen months of my career, something that I have never experienced prior. The mental stress of my job began impacting all areas of my life, including the most important, my family. No amount of training or time on the job can prepare someone for these experiences, nor the emotional and psychological toll such work can take on us. Unfortunately, my story is not uncommon.

With this information, I am therefore asking you to please vote yes on this initiative, to further protect the probation workforce of Minnesota. Establishing a more reasonable retirement age for us, particularly when compared to our federal agencies and surrounding states, will reinforce our commitment to long-term public service in our communities and to public safety and will positively impact our ability to effectively perform our job duties. It will better protect us from the vicarious trauma we will undoubtedly continue to hold and will better preserve our overall empathy and wellness. A vote for this initiative will also provide incentive for the next generation of community corrections employees to continue this serious but important and meaningful work, to ensure an overall safer Minnesota.

Thank you very much for your time.

Jenna Williams

Probation/Parole Officer

AFSCME Local 552

Good Morning,

I am writing in support of HF 1779/SF 1986, Reasonable Retirement for Probation Officers, here in the State of Minnesota. I began working for Hennepin County at the age of 23, after obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice-Sociology and a minor in Psychology. I began working as a Correctional Officer at the Adult Corrections Facility in Plymouth, MN in 1991. I am not eligible for Rule of 90, as I began working about one and a half years after this program was terminated. While working in this capacity for five years, I was responsible for the safety and security of both male and female residents. As you may assume, my role also included responding to threatening behavior, between residents and against staff, in addition to mental health and medical emergencies, including residents hurting themselves. I was able to promote to Probation Officer and for the first ten years, I was assigned to Pretrial Services, where I spent several hours in Hennepin County Adult Detention Center, interviewing clients in-person, assessing their risk to the community, and assisting the Court in release and bail decisions. For the past 18 years, I have been writing Pre-Sentence Investigations on felony offenders, to assist the Court in determining whether or not an individual should be sent to prison or remain in the community. The expectation of this position, like the ones I have had in the past, requires me to have direct contact with individuals accused and/or convicted of crimes that include murder of multiple family members, including their own children, and rape. I also routinely meet with individuals that suffer from mental illness, some of whom have the capacity to become violent without displaying physical signs of escalation. A situation that I personally experienced was being alone in a room with a client who was in possession of a knife and I convinced him to relinquish it.

Myself and my coworkers are required to attend several trainings each year, including de-escalation and defensive tactics. Course Objectives-Participants will be able to:

- Identify common objects found in the office or field that can be used as weapons and **demonstrate how to defend against their use in an attack.**
- Describe the DOCCR Use of Force Continuum.
- Identify the Use of Force Considerations.
- Demonstrate the Relative Positioning approaches.
- Describe Reasonable Safety Guidelines.
- Demonstrate empty hand control and **survival techniques.**
- Demonstrate two primary stances used in control tactics.
- Demonstrate movement exercises that help me to learn to go with the flow of energy.
- Explain and demonstrate two ground fighting techniques.
- Defend myself, using reasonable force, should I be threatened in the office or the field.
- Explain and demonstrate how to **break choke holds.**
- Demonstrate how to control **confrontations with knives and guns.**

Over the many years that I have been required to attend these trainings, the curriculum has included having actual 911 tapes being played, which involve victims who have been or are in the process of being mortally wounded, while trying to summons Law-Enforcement and/or Emergency Medical Services, trying to save their own lives.

Also, during these trainings, we discuss situations, scenarios, and how to de-escalate or avoid escalation, based on observations of our clients. However, the majority of the time spent training is learning and practicing skills to avoid being hit, kicked, strangled, being attacked with a weapon; including knives and firearms.

While the threat of violence in my work with the Criminal Justice System is not as high as someone who works in Law Enforcement, I am not allowed to carry a firearm, pepper spray, or any other personal protection device, during the course of my workday. For personal protection, I have made the decision to apply and have had a permit to carry and/or concealed a firearm for close to 20 years. There is always a threat that someone that I have had contact with over the course of 33 years of employment, may have ill-will against me and may have thoughts of harming, me and my family.

Secondary trauma, also known as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, which is a psychological condition that occurs when a person is exposed to the traumatic experiences of another individual, either through first-hand witnessing, hearing detailed accounts, or providing care to supervisors.

I sincerely hope that you take my personal story and life experience into consideration during discussions of the 60/30 Reasonable Retirement bill that is now in front of both Houses of the Minnesota legislature. I am proud to have spent 33 years of my life assisting the Court in finding fair and equitable outcomes, including recommending programs and services to assist clients in making positive changes in their lives.

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Jeri Schmitz Bailey

Career Probation Officer

Hennepin County

Department of Community Corrections and Rehabilitation

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jeri.schmitz-bailey@hennepin.us

To the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement:

I'm currently a Career Probation Officer with the Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections and AFSCME Local 552 member. I'm writing in request of your support for HF 1779/SF 1986, to allow a reasonable retirement age for Probation Officers in Minnesota.

In my 27 years serving the community as a Probation Officer, I have experienced direct and secondary trauma as a result of my daily responsibilities as an agent. Working in direct client supervision, it is expected that agents visit clients in the community, which can place agents in dangerous situations. In my personal experience, I once came within a few feet of being struck by a stray bullet during a drive-by shooting while meeting with a client in the community and have been nearly attacked by large dogs, armed with only a clipboard to defend myself. Performing such duties beyond age 60 is very concerning from a personal safety standpoint. I also had an instance where family members of a client I supervised came to my personal residence on a weekend to address the client's behavior causing both concern for my safety as well the safety of my family in what is supposed to be my safe haven. I'm also aware of many instances among my colleagues who have experienced direct threats, harassment, and have been assaulted while performing their duties as a Probation Officer.

Working with criminally involved clients also causes significant emotional strain on agents as we are often exposed to serious criminal behaviors while engaging with clients and victims to assist in working with them through their trauma and victimization. This type of exposure has a lasting impact on our lives and is not something we can simply turn off at the end of each workday. We often bring this secondary trauma home, which impacts our personal life and families.

Considering these factors, I believe that working in this field for over 35 years and/or the age of 60 is particularly detrimental to agents lives and compromises our ability to effectively carry out the expected duties of the job. Establishing a reasonable retirement age for Minnesota's Probation Officers, similar to officers in neighboring states as well as federal agencies, appropriately recognizes the importance of maintaining the emotional and physical wellness for agents as well as ensuring greater public safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nate Messmer

Hennepin County Department of Community Corrections & Rehabilitation

AFSCME Local 552



To Whom It May Concern,

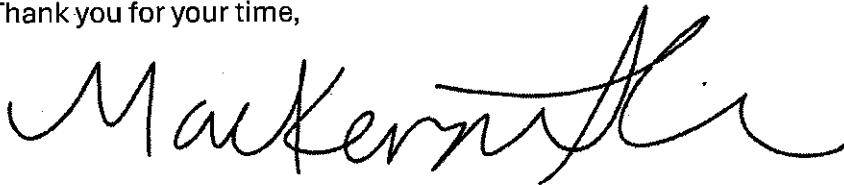
I am a Probation/Parole Office in Minnesota. I have been in this career field for 10 years and plan to continue my career as a Probation/Parole Officer. This job is demanding yet rewarding. Being able to help guide individuals towards goals and keep the community safe is something that I strive for.

I conduct home visits, community visits, office visits, searches, and engagements in high-risk situations. This can not only bring trauma to a client but also myself and my coworkers along side of me. We put ourselves in dangerous situations more than we can think. Being able to be protected physically and mentally will provide security and in my opinion, higher morale within our workforce. By approving the bill to allow Probation/Parole office the opportunity to retire at 60, would benefit mental health along with community safety.

We work in high-risk situations in high-risk communities. We are also people and people that deserve protection and care. Yes, we are serving the community and caring for clients to overcome significant trauma and generational barriers, but that comes with hardships. We also have trauma with his career field and have to overcome challenges in order to provide the best service possible.

The 35/60 Bill is something to give back to the Probation/Parole Officers of the community and provide incentives for the following generations to continue to work with the community.

Thank you for your time,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mackenzie Hill'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

Mackenzie Hill

Secondary Trauma, Burnout, and Organizational Stressors: The Case for Early Retirement Protections for Probation Officers

A growing body of empirical research demonstrates that probation officers face systemic occupational hazards rooted in chronic exposure to secondary trauma, emotional exhaustion, and organizational mismanagement. These factors precipitate burnout rates comparable to—and in some cases exceeding—those observed in law enforcement, necessitating policy interventions to protect workforce sustainability and public safety. This report synthesizes evidence from 14 peer-reviewed studies to establish that probation officers experience cumulative psychological harm from their roles, warranting early retirement provisions akin to those afforded to police officers.

Prevalence and Mechanisms of Secondary Trauma in Probation Work

Defining Secondary Trauma in Correctional Contexts

Secondary trauma, also termed *vicarious traumatization*, arises from prolonged exposure to the traumatic experiences of others, manifesting in symptoms akin to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)^{[1] [2] [3]}. For probation officers, this exposure occurs through routine duties: reviewing violent crime reports, supervising offenders with histories of abuse, and interfacing with victims' families^{[4] [2]}. A qualitative study of parole officers supervising sex offenders found that 78% reported intrusive thoughts about clients' crimes, hypervigilance in public spaces, and emotional detachment from loved ones—hallmarks of secondary traumatic stress^[1]. Unlike primary trauma, which stems from direct victimization, secondary trauma develops insidiously through repeated empathetic engagement with distressing narratives^{[5] [3]}.

Quantitative Evidence of Trauma Prevalence

Studies utilizing the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) reveal that 22–34% of probation officers exhibit moderate-to-severe symptoms of secondary trauma, with 12% meeting diagnostic thresholds for compassion fatigue^{[6] [2]}. Comparatively, police officers report lower secondary trauma rates (10% high symptomology)^[7], suggesting probation work entails unique emotional risks. Longitudinal data from Ontario correctional systems indicate that officers with over 10 years of service face a 40% higher likelihood of developing PTSD-like symptoms compared to newer recruits^{[4] [3]}. This disparity underscores the cumulative toll of chronic exposure.

Long-Term Cognitive and Behavioral Impacts

Secondary trauma reshapes officers' worldview, eroding trust in societal institutions and fostering cynicism^{[8] [3]}. A mixed-methods study of 189 Israeli probation officers linked secondary trauma to diminished perceptions of safety and disrupted attachment styles, impairing both personal relationships and professional judgment^[3]. Furthermore, 63% of officers in high-risk roles reported adopting avoidant behaviors—such as minimizing client interactions—to self-protect, inadvertently compromising rehabilitation outcomes^{[8] [9]}.

Burnout: Components, Consequences, and Contributing Factors

The Tripartite Model of Burnout

Burnout in probation officers aligns with Maslach's framework: **emotional exhaustion** (58% prevalence), **depersonalization** (41%), and **reduced personal accomplishment** (33%)^{[10] [11]}. Emotional exhaustion, the most prevalent component, stems from unsustainable caseloads and the emotional labor of balancing enforcement with rehabilitation mandates^{[8] [11]}. Depersonalization—viewing clients as "cases" rather than individuals—correlates with punitive supervision styles, while diminished accomplishment predicts attrition^{[10] [12]}.

Organizational Drivers of Burnout

Meta-analyses identify role ambiguity and resource scarcity as primary burnout catalysts^{[10] [2]}. Probation officers frequently navigate conflicting expectations: enforcing compliance while fostering rehabilitative trust^{[11] [9]}. A survey of 798 U.S. officers found that 67% lacked access to trauma-informed training, and 52% reported insufficient staffing to manage caseloads exceeding 100 clients^{[2] [11]}. Bureaucratic tasks consume 30–40% of work hours, diverting time from client engagement and exacerbating frustration^{[4] [13]}.

Health and Performance Outcomes

Burnout elevates risks for cardiovascular disease, insomnia, and substance use disorders among officers^{[10] [12]}. A longitudinal study of Canadian correctional workers revealed that burnout mediates a 300% increase in sick leave utilization and a 25% turnover rate within five years^{[4] [2]}. For officers remaining in roles, burnout reduces diagnostic accuracy; 44% of juvenile probation officers acknowledged missing critical risk factors in client assessments due to cognitive fatigue^{[8] [9]}.

Organizational Stressors Amplifying Trauma and Burnout

Caseload Complexity and Safety Threats

Probation officers increasingly supervise high-risk populations, including sex offenders (22% of caseloads) and individuals with severe mental illness (34%)^{[13] [2]}. Over 60% of officers in urban jurisdictions report being stalked, threatened, or assaulted by clients or their associates—a rate surpassing that of patrol officers^{[13] [3]}. Such threats perpetuate hypervigilance, with 55% altering daily routines (e.g., avoiding public spaces) to mitigate perceived risks^{[1] [13]}.

Administrative Overload and Resource Gaps

Paperwork burdens have surged due to electronic monitoring and standardized risk-assessment tools, consuming 15–20 hours weekly per officer^{[4] [9]}. Concurrently, budget cuts have slashed access to mental health collaboratives; only 29% of U.S. probation departments provide on-site counseling, versus 89% of police agencies^{[2] [14]}. This resource gap leaves officers ill-equipped to manage clients' trauma-related needs, fostering helplessness and resentment^{[8] [11]}.

Workplace Culture and Support Deficits

Hierarchical organizational structures often stigmatize help-seeking; 73% of officers fear career repercussions for disclosing mental health struggles^{[13] [14]}. Peer support programs, proven to reduce burnout in law enforcement, are absent in 82% of probation agencies^{[14] [3]}. Instead, officers rely on maladaptive coping mechanisms—24% report alcohol misuse, and 18% use prescription sedatives^{[4] [12]}.

Comparative Analysis with High-Risk Professions

Burnout Parity with Law Enforcement

While police face higher acute trauma rates, probation officers exhibit comparable burnout levels. Emotional exhaustion scores for probation officers (M = 34.2) mirror those of police (M = 33.8) on the Maslach Burnout Inventory^{[7] [11]}. Notably, probation roles lack the camaraderie and institutional support buffers (e.g., critical incident debriefs) available in policing, accelerating burnout progression^{[14] [3]}.

Secondary Trauma Exceeding First Responder Benchmarks

Probation officers' secondary trauma scores surpass those of paramedics and firefighters. On the Secondary Trauma Scale (STS), officers average 24.1 points versus 18.9 for first responders—a 22% disparity attributed to chronic versus episodic exposure^{[5] [7]}. Unlike emergency personnel, probation work offers no "recovery phase" between traumatic encounters, as caseloads persist for months or years^{[2] [3]}.

Retirement Inequities and Workforce Implications

Police retire after 20 years with full pensions in 90% of U.S. states, while probation officers average 35 years of service before eligibility^{[13] [14]}. This discrepancy persists despite probation's 15% higher burnout-related attrition rate^{[2] [11]}. Without early retirement options, agencies risk losing seasoned officers precisely when expertise is most critical—a vulnerability exploited by recidivism cycles^{[8] [9]}.

Implications for Workforce Sustainability and Public Safety

Compromised Supervision Efficacy

Burnout directly undermines probation's rehabilitative mission. Officers with high emotional exhaustion are 40% less likely to recommend treatment programs, opting instead for punitive sanctions that increase recidivism^{[11] [9]}. In Texas, jurisdictions with burnout rates above 50% saw 22% higher parole violations compared to well-resourced counterparts^{[8] [2]}.

Economic Costs of Delayed Intervention

Replacing a single probation officer costs agencies \$145,000 in recruitment and training^{[13] [2]}. Current turnover rates (15–25% annually) drain \$2.3 billion from U.S. correctional budgets—funds that could otherwise expand mental health services^{[13] [2]}. Early retirement pathways retain institutional knowledge while preventing costly disability claims linked to PTSD^{[14] [3]}.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Early Retirement Eligibility:** Reduce service requirements to 25 years for probation officers, mirroring police standards^{[13] [14]}.
2. **Trauma-Informed Reforms:** Mandate secondary trauma screenings and provide access to confidential counseling^{[1] [3]}.
3. **Caseload Caps:** Limit probation officers to 60 clients to mitigate overload^{[4] [8]}.
4. **Peer Support Networks:** Fund mentorship programs to normalize help-seeking behaviors^{[14] [9]}.

Conclusion

Probation officers operate at the nexus of public safety and societal trauma, absorbing psychological harms that irrevocably impair health and performance. The evidence unequivocally demonstrates that secondary trauma and burnout in this workforce warrant policy parity with law enforcement. Legislators must recognize probation's hidden hazards through early retirement provisions—a cost-effective measure to sustain those who safeguard community well-being.

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21948251/>
2. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9225775/>
3. [https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6698/1/Accepted lit review- LF & HS.pdf](https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6698/1/Accepted%20lit%20review-%20LF%20&%20HS.pdf)
4. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0264550520984253>
5. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6346705/>
6. <https://scholarworks.calstate.edu/concern/projects/zg64ts930>
7. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10699295/>
8. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/46960472.pdf>
9. <https://www.uis.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/TheOtherSideofBurnoutFinal.pdf>
10. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23303131.2015.1014122>
11. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9291604/>
12. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6208912/>
13. <https://mnpera.org/wp-content/uploads/TAB-G-2025-Stakeholder-Agenda-Probation-Officers.pdf>
14. https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=criminal-justice_masters

