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## Probation Association of New Jersey

*Serving New Jersey Since 1904*

*An affiliate of the American Probation and Parole Association*

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March 2, 2009

Honorable Diane Allen  
Senator, 7<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
11 West Broad Street, Suite B  
Burlington, NJ 8016-4137

Re: Senate Bill 958 which provides for a mandatory minimum term for assaulting a law enforcement officer

Dear Senator Allen:

As the representative union for almost three thousand probation officers and supervisors in New Jersey, we respectfully support Senate Bill 958 (S-958) that would provide for a mandatory minimum term for assaulting a law enforcement officer. We believe that this measure goes a long way to send a clear message that criminals who target law enforcement officers will be held to the strictest of penalties for their actions. In doing so, we would like to ensure that probation officers are included in the provisions of this measure since our officers directly interact and supervise nearly 300,000 adult and 20,000 juvenile probationers.

We are concerned that the definition of law enforcement which provides for the mandatory minimum does not explicitly list probation officers as a protected group. While probation officers are included in current law with respect to aggravated assault, we would like to ensure, without a shadow of a doubt, that assaulting a probation officer would carry a mandatory minimum sentence.

Probation officers are day-in and day-out sent into some of the most dangerous areas of our state to supervise those who have been convicted of crimes ranging from carjacking to assault to sexual offenses. It is our duty to rehabilitate and supervise these individuals regardless of the threat to our personal safety. These criminals, who are a true danger to society, as evidenced by their long criminal histories, oftentimes do not hesitate to disregard, disrespect or cross the line to threaten their supervising probation officer.

In one incident a few years ago, a gun was held to the head of one of our probation officers while they were working in the community. Thankfully, the officer was able to get out of the dangerous situation without significant injuries. The fear of future incidents is not uncommon.

When our officers go out into the community to complete house visits, they never know what potential danger lurks behind the door of an offender's home. There are often alerts put out to law enforcement when crime incidents spike in certain neighborhoods. However, our officers must go to these homes and take their chances that they will be in harm's way. The reality that lives with us every day is that it's only a matter of time before one of our officers is a victim.

We thank you for your support of S-958 and ask for a steadfast clarification that probation officers are enumerated in the law enforcement definition of this bill. The work that our committed probation officers and supervisors continue to do on a daily basis warrant the knowledge that offenders who assault a probation officer will face a strict sentence.

Thank you for the opportunity to address our concerns. If you have any questions regarding our position on this bill, please feel free to contact me at (732) 223-1799.

Sincerely,

George Christie  
President  
Probation Association of New Jersey

cc: Sen. John Gigenti, chairman, Senate Law and Public Safety and Veterans' Affairs Committee  
Sen. Brian Stack, vice-chairman  
Sen. Nicholas Sacco  
Sen. Anthony Bucco  
Sen. Christopher Connors  
Mr. Joseph Blaney, Senate Democratic Office  
Mr. Frank Dominguez, Senate Republican Office  
Ms. Anne Stefane, Office of Legislative Services