

Chair Hunt opened the meeting, recognized Senate Chair Brownsberger, welcomed members, briefly reviewed the agenda, and directed Commission members to introduce themselves.

Commissioners Present:

Commissioner Hunt, Chair
Commissioner Brownsberger, Chair
Commissioner Reyes
Commissioner Cahillane
Commissioner Cabral
Commissioner Gittens
Commissioner Ifill (*TEAMS*)
Commissioner Monteiro (*TEAMS*)

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Gomez
Commissioner Muradian
Commissioner Amore
Commissioner McDonald
Commissioner Cocchi
Commissioner Mici
Commissioner Jean- Jacques
Commissioner Peck
Commissioner Dupuis
Commissioner Tochtka

With a quorum present, Chair Hunt made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2025 meeting. Motion seconded by Representative Reyes and supported unanimously. Sheriff Cahillane presented a statement of his closing remarks from the May 5th meeting to be added as an addendum for the record. Chair Brownsberger confirmed that the remarks would be added to the Commission's web page along with the approved minutes.

Commissioner Ifill offered introductory remarks on behalf of himself, Mike Coelho, and the entire Massachusetts Probation Services, as well as, Vin Lorenti- Director of the Office of Community Corrections.

- MA Probation Services is the largest post-release supervision agency in the Commonwealth with a legislative directive to support the justice involved, be a good faith partner, and manage shared resources.
- The Commissioner appreciates the legislative directive to manage shared resources.
 - The wisdom of having shared resources is not just an issue of economy of scale but to provide systemwide uniform infrastructure to better engage field level re-

entry outcomes and ensure warm reception of returning citizens into society despite their going through a complicated process.

- Legislative structures put in place in 1996, 2011, and 2018 have helped make MA one of the states with the lowest incarceration rates in the country and one with ever improving recidivism rates
- Probation services is constantly looking at their policies and practices to provide the best supports and outcomes
- They have reduced standard conditions of probation from 22 to 16 which has led to significant reductions in violation rates
- Making significant improvements in ways they are addressing noncompliance in re-offenders
- Still have work to do in this space but are seeing improvements.
- Values all of their criminal justice partners and community based provider
- Probation works with 60,000 people on average
 - Includes about 12,000 care protection cases
 - Care protection and cases involving children require a significant body of work
 - There are about 10,000 individuals not receiving adult supervision
- They are looking at inequity and disparity and how it plays out across court system
 - Have implemented mandatory bias trainings across the system, focusing on how they understand, address, and work with diverse populations
 - Diverse populations including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, gender, religious background, language.
 - Making efforts to ensure workforce reflect and understand communities they provide
 - Given the diverse population, including a sizable population returning from prison, life skills, behavioral changes, and employment skills are focus areas
- Major work is being done at Community Justice Support Centers throughout the Commonwealth
- Trial Court and Probation has embarked on community engagement strategy to address mistrust
 - Addressing areas of mistrust in communities while still maintaining high level of accountability for people who are noncompliant with judicial orders
 - Empathy, support, trust, and connection are part of building better outcomes

Commissioner Ifill then turned the floor over to Mike Coelho.

Chair Hunt thanks Commissioner Ifill.

Commissioner Gittens asks how much work on racial and ethnic disparities is federally funded

Commissioner Ifill explains that all of their work related to diversity is funded through the trial court and probation's budget.

Commissioner Reyes asks if Commissioner Ifill can elaborate a little bit more about mistrust and what he thinks we can do for better outcomes.

Commissioner Ifill responds that probation and the trial court:

- Have set up a number of community based surveys to ask people about their access to and use of services and information as well as their treatment by trial court staff
- Have taken steps to simplify language for those with lower English proficiency.
- Have started translating documents into the 10 most common second languages
- Have conducted several regional based conversations with communities
- Are trying to build human connection through staff with greater linguistic, gender, racial, geographic, socioeconomic, career, and educational backgrounds as opposed to purely law enforcement backgrounds

The commissioner further noted that in 2017 the Massachusetts Probation Services was about 21% diverse; now the organizations is about 32%-33% diverse.

Mike Coelho begins presentation on behalf of Probation.

- Introduces Vin Lorenti, Director of the Office of Community Corrections and shares about the last decade of work to make community justice support centers strong sources of treatment oriented community based support.
- Increased coordination between probation, parole, DOC, and the sheriffs to coordinate shared resources.
- Massachusetts Probation Service is the largest post-release supervision agency due to the "from and after" sentencing practice.
- As of April 2025 3,219 people were subject to from and after sentence with 2,508 being actively supervised and are eligible for compliance credits (66% supervised by superior court probation department).
- "From and after" refers to sentences of a set time of incarceration followed by mandatory probation supervision.
- The practice originates from problems with discretionary parole.
- Compliance credit offers probation sentence reductions for compliance.

Chair Brownberger asks about the difference between the 3,219 people subject to "from and after" sentence and the 2,508 people being actively supervised .

Coelho responds that those 700 people are currently incarcerated but that Probation tracks them so that they can supervise upon release. He says that he has a more detailed breakdown of the sentence structures based on Chair Brownsberger's questions.

Commissioner Gitten mentions dual supervision between parole and probation.

Commissioner Cabral asks whether the number of "from and after" sentences have decreased due to parole reforms.

Coelho agrees that parole has made changes and believes that more people are being sentenced to traditional parole eligible sentences.

Commissioner Ifill mentions the MOU between Probation and Parole that makes sure the process of post-release supervision is not duplicative.

Commissioner Gitten explains that "from and after" and parole sentences can be in different cases.

Coelho continues presentation:

- Pew Trusts cites MA as a significantly lower contributor to prison population due to revocation compared to other states.
- Coelho explains compliance, technical violations, and revocation.
- Violations decreased from 31,000 in 2019 to 17,000 in 2023.
- Two-thirds of the 17,000 violations are technical.
- Probation wants to continue to reduce technical violations.

Chair Brownsberger inquired as to the methodology of the comparison made by Pew Trust study.

Coelho continues:

- Community Justice Support Centers
 - First developed in 1996.
 - Allows for use by correctional system as step down or day programming for inmates or parolees.
 - Available for all who have been incarcerated.
 - Informed by community Justice approach that focuses on building partnerships, community integration, and problem solving.
 - CJSCs had their name changed after hearing from participants about the previous name (part of work with advisory board with formerly justice involved individuals).

- Support centers assess actuarial risk, set up individual treatment plans, and focus on cognitive behavioral therapy.
- Assess programs for effectiveness through data, evidence based approaches with Pew-MacArthur Trusts, results first, UMass Chan, and justice reinvestment and make changes in order to better individual sites, systems, and programs.
- UPenn study shows lower recidivism rates through CJSCs.

Chair Brownsberger and Director Lorenti discuss the study conducted by UPenn.

Coelho Continues:

- Community Justice Support Centers
 - Discusses risk assessments and support offered by CJSCs including education, employment counseling, community resources, random drug and alcohol screening, community service, and cognitive behavioral therapy
 - Stresses the importance of time and increased structure for a lot of cognitive behavioral interventions
 - Pathways to support centers include required (pretrial, pretrial with consent, intensive supervision, probation officer referral) and walk-in (re-entry or probation, Ralph Gants Project)

Commissioner Cahillane discusses a graduation ceremony he saw at a CJSC and the importance of CJSC in his experiences with justice involved individuals who have been helped by CJSC.

Commissioner Cabral asks if judges and DAs are aware of the information Probation has from CJSCs?

Commissioner Ifill and Director Lorenti respond that judges are made aware when Probation provides them with probation records. Lorenti mentions that probation has been doing trainings for offices and new ADAs on the work that probation does, but acknowledges that it can be more systematic.

Coelho continues:

- Ralph Gants project:
 - If you have been formerly incarcerated you can meet with a re-entry services coordinator.
 - Re-entry services can help with re-entry care packages, transportation resources, public benefits, state IDs, and transitional housing.
 - Mentions programs to get probation staff certified as Mass Health Community Application Counselors.
 - 580 people in FY2025 avoided incarceration through CJSCs.

- In April 2024 there were 100 voluntary participants engaged in programming and 176 voluntary participants engaged in only case management.

Commissioner Montero asks whether the low number of people requesting help with veteran services is related to the number of veterans in the program or the rate at which that population is declining services.

Lorenti responds that it is possible that the centers are just not the first place that the population would go to access veterans' services.

Coelho says that they share a list of people under supervision with the VA for them to identify those who qualify for veteran services and that there is a large difference between self-identified veterans and those identified by the VA.

Commissioner Gitten asks about the mental health services available at centers.

Coelho responds by saying that the centers try to refer out to providers but that it remains a challenge to access evaluations and community resources.

Commissioner Cabral and Director Lorenti discuss Mass health referrals at CJSCs, the voluntary nature of Gant's participants, and how that affects the number of referrals made.

Commissioner Ifill says that intake forms now include a question about whether or not they have health insurance in order to identify people and help them.

Commissioner Cahillane remarks that those in Sheriffs' custody are offered help accessing Mass Health as they transition out and focus on Medicaid eligibility.

Coelho mentions probation's participation in the BHI initiative which dedicates a behavioral health provider for substance abuse and mental health to each county to focus on the justice involved.

Commissioner Monteiro asks whether mental health and substance abuse are part of probation's risk assessments or whether it is entirely voluntary.

Coelho clarifies that mental health is not a risk factor but it is a responsibility factor. Mental health evaluations are often referred out.

Director Lorenti and Commissioner Cabral discuss the process for probations coordination with medication assisted treatment.

Commissioner Gitten speaks about the reduction of stigma and the rates of self-identification of mental health challenges.

Coelho resumes the presentation:

- Behavioral Initiative for the Justice Involved
 - As of January 31, 2025, 10,917 referrals have been made and 7,574 participants enrolled to date.
 - Statewide program as of February 2022.
 - Voluntary program, about 69% of those referred are enrolled. Includes Probation, Sheriffs, and DOC.
 - Discusses the Bi-monthly meetings that encourage collaboration between MassHealth, ForHealth constant, DPH, DMH, CPCS, etc.
- Housing Support:
 - Two paths:
 - traditional transitional housing for men and women with 169 beds across the state
 - Sober housing for 3 month terms which began with about 60 houses in 2020 and grew to 160 houses, but Probation still wants to increase the locations particularly in certain areas.
 - The housing is a shared resource between parole, DOC, and probation.
- Accountability:
 - Performance based contracting, budget accountability, CJSCs annual reporting, improved shared resource coordination, and UMass Chan monitoring and support

Commissioner Cabral asks about federal cuts and Coelho responds that as of now their funding under the Second Chance Act has been preserved.

Commissioner Ifill, Deputy Commissioner Coelho and Director Lorenti, thank the commission for the opportunity to speak as well as the staff of the probation department for their work each day.

Commissioner Monteiro thanks the probation department for their work to end more punitive practices and for the work to grow services and support for the justice involved.

Chair Hunt says that all materials including the presentation slide deck will be posted.

Commissioner Cabral expresses appreciation for parole, probation, and the sheriffs for being intentional about helping people.

Chair Brownsberger asks for more demographic information related to supervision categories

Chair Hunt reminds the commission that there will be a meeting on July 11, 2025 in the same room with a presentation by Undersecretary Peck.

Meeting adjourned.