

**SENATE APPROPRIATIONS -GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS DIVISION
SENATOR TERRY WANZEK, CHAIR
MARCH 8, 2023**

**TOM ERHARDT, DIRECTOR, PAROLE AND PROBATION
PRESENTING TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1015**

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee – Government Operations Division, my name is Tom Erhardt, and I am the Director of Parole and Probation, a division of the North Dakota Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (DOCR). I stand before you today to testify in favor of House Bill 1015.

The DOCR's Parole and Probation Division employs 149 staff, 98 are sworn peace officers as required by N.D.C.C. Section 12-59-20. The Parole and Probation Division has 17 district offices throughout the state serving our communities by supervising approximately 6,500 adults who are released from incarceration to parole, sentenced to probation or ordered to pretrial supervision by the district courts, or transferred from other states via the Interstate Compact for Adult Offender Supervision.

A parole and probation officer's job is unique in that we take on two roles. Our primary role is helping the individuals we supervise find resources, teaching them prosocial skills to handle risky situations, and providing mentorship so they can desist from crime. The second role is holding these individuals accountable to the conditions of supervision and enforcing those conditions, including enforcement of the laws of this state.

individual understands the conditions of supervision, refer for resources, and provide additional reporting instructions. Individuals may reside in Transitional Facilities, community placements, or a treatment center – each release plan is unique. This re-entry phase can be quite challenging for these individuals. As I stated earlier, in cooperation with Free Through Recovery, parole and probation staff supervise the individuals first to help, and if the individual does not desist from criminal behaviors, then to hold accountable.

Parole and Probation faces many challenges. One challenge is high caseloads in several areas of the state. The House of Representatives removed several FTE positions from the Executive Budget, and I look forward to conversations about our need for these positions in future budget hearings in the hope that they could be reinstated. Our goal is to have caseload averages in the 40-45 range for staff to be even more effective with their clients. These positions will help achieve that goal.

Thank you for considering Parole and Probation's budget requests within the full DOCR budget in HB 1015 so that we can further fulfill our mission. I will stand to answer any questions I can. Thank you.