



## VIRGINIA PROBATION AND PAROLE ASSOCIATION

Fostering Leadership, Advocacy and Professionalism

BEN MORGAN  
PRESIDENT

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This is written in response to statements made by Governor Northam on June 10, 2021 during the Press Conference relative to the signing of HB2038.

In his comments, the Governor made casual reference to Probationers being returned to incarceration for technical violations. In "corrections-speak", this means a violation of a probation rule other than a new law violation/conviction. He specifically spoke of Probationers being returned to jail for "missing a meeting" and "failure to report a change in jobs". While these rules are part of the document known as the standard conditions of supervision, the fact is that it is very seldom that Probationers are returned to Court by Probation/Parole Officers (PPO's) in Virginia for a single technical violation.

Unfortunately, that was not always the case in Virginia. There was a time when the Virginia Department of Corrections was a lot less concerned about an individual's risk and needs while under supervision. However, in 2021, the Commonwealth of Virginia has the distinction of having the second lowest recidivism numbers for Probationers/Parolees released from incarceration. Prior to this year, Virginia had the lowest recidivism numbers in the country for four consecutive years.

Virginia is held as a national example of how the use of Evidence Based Practices relative to successful re-entry of incarcerated folks back into society is being administered successfully. These practices, including effective communication skills, were introduced into DOC operations as an initiative in 2009 and the first practitioners of these skills were PPO's. The use of these skills to precipitate productive working relationships with Probationers/Parolees is now a significant part of Basic Skills Training for new PPO's in Virginia, and PPO's are coached on opportunities to use these skills BEFORE returning someone to Court for a Probation Violation. The use of research based business practices to promote prosocial behavior change is intrinsic to the mission of the VADOC.

This background is important because it is in direct contrast with the reference Governor Northam made to the implied capriciousness of PPO's in Virginia returning people on supervision to Court for a "missed meeting" or a "change in job". Many PPO's are very invested in these practices and believe that part of their role is to advocate for those they supervise, as well as hold them accountable for adherence to Court orders. These are truly public servants and act on behalf of the citizens of the Commonwealth to ensure Public Safety, and they do it with dignity and respect.



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This statement is written and submitted by the Virginia Probation and Parole Association and does not represent the opinions of the Virginia Department of Corrections. VPPA is a non-profit organization with a membership of several hundred Probation/Parole Officers across the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ben Morgan'.

Ben Morgan, President  
Virginia Probation & Parole Association  
2209 Florida Avenue  
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Su Tarr'.

Su Tarr, Public Information Officer  
Virginia Probation & Parole Association  
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