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Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr., Chairman
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Thank you, Chairman Sarlo, Vice Chair Cunningham, and members of this committee for allowing me the opportunity to make the case for continued, sound investment in the New Jersey Parole Board system. The New Jersey State Parole Board is committed to promoting public safety and fostering the successful rehabilitation of offenders by implementing policies that result in effective case management for 15,556 offenders who are under agency supervision. By making intelligent, responsible, and impactful parole release decisions and developing and implementing effective and innovative field supervision techniques, the New Jersey State Parole Board continues to be nationally recognized for the successful and sustainable reintegration of offenders into society while helping to drastically reduce the prison population.

Through the utilization of evidence-based practices, approaches, and proactive leadership, as well as the commitment of all of the members of the State Parole Board, we collectively continue to seek to improve the lives of the state's offenders, their families, and their communities. These accomplishments would not be possible without the dedication and hard work of the 587 men and women of this agency who perform their duties and responsibilities efficiently and effectively. It is vitally important to note that in addition to State Parole Board personnel, favorable partnerships help spur our success as we continue to engage with numerous local, state, and federal law enforcement entities, as well as other government agencies, and community and faith-based organizations.

For several years, New Jersey, in particular the State Parole Board, has been recognized by several nationally recognized criminal justice and nonpartisan research centers such as, *The Sentencing Project*, *Pew Research Center*, *Brennan Center for Justice* and the *Justice Center of the Council of State Governments* as a national leader for the consistent recidivism reduction of our state prison population, significant reductions in parole revocations that would have resulted in re-incarceration, all while uniform crime rates continued to decline. While the current national recidivism rate averages 67.8% (according to the National Institute of Justice), the rate at which released offenders return to prison in New Jersey continues to decline and currently stands as one of the nation's lowest at 31%. Our efforts, which include more residential and community-based programs, have resulted in safer communities and productive, law-abiding and tax-paying ex-offenders who have contributed to the towns and cities which they have returned to.

The State Parole Board firmly believes that we best achieve our public safety and positive reentry missions through effecting change in the lives of those being supervised rather than through the revocation of parole. This vision is reflected in the revocation statistics previously mentioned as well as through the successes of numerous individuals under supervision.

You may be aware of an achievement that the State Parole Board garnered in May 2013, when we received our initial accreditation as a law enforcement agency through the *New Jersey State Association of Chiefs of Police*. Our agency achieved its first reaccreditation in March of 2017. This significant law enforcement accreditation recognizes the State Parole Board's compliance with 105 "best practice" standards, which results in greater accountability within the agency, reduced risk and liability exposure, stronger defense against civil lawsuits, better augmentation of community advocacy programs, increased confidence in the agency's ability to operate efficiently, and the ability to respond to a variety of community needs.

The State Parole Board's Division of Parole and the *New Jersey Office of Information Technology* (NJOIT) continue to provide tangible and critical real-time parole supervision case management data through the Supervised Release File to the *FBI's National Crime Information Center*. This dynamic response system enables intelligence data sharing between our Division of Parole and all partnering law enforcement agencies throughout the nation. Collaborations such as this have received several national awards but most importantly, enhance officer safety.

The Division of Parole remains an important full-time partner with multiple federal and state joint law enforcement projects such as: *The Office of the Attorney General Violence Reduction Initiatives (VRI)*, *Violent Enterprise Source Targeting (VEST)*, *Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC)*, *USMS Fugitive Task Force*, *USMS Gang Task Force*, *FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force*, *Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC)*, *TOP GUN*, *FBI National Academy*, and other endeavors. These partnerships are paramount to law enforcement tactical preparedness and response for a whole host of obvious reasons with public safety being front and center.

The State Parole Board does not prescribe to the belief that one single strategy, approach, or solution fully promotes public safety and/or fosters a positive rehabilitative, pro-social model for an offender. It is the synthesis of the agency's individual components, programs, services, and partnerships that define its positive outcomes. The State Parole Board's Community Programs Division is dedicated to developing, coordinating, and managing the provision of quality treatment and services to individuals under parole supervision. This is done through community-based programs, community partnerships, grant initiatives and special projects designed to support the re-entry and effective supervision of offenders, to promote pro-social behavior and to improve the quality of lives in our communities.

This Division administers contracts for the operation of Community Resource Centers, the Reentry Substance Abuse Program (RESAP) and Stages to Enhance Parolee Success (STEPS) residential programs, the Mutual Agreement Program (in partnership with the *Department of Human Services, Division of Addiction Services*), and other specialized programs. Responsibilities include contract administration, grant management, offender referral and placement, program monitoring, quality assurance, development of applicable policies and procedures, and maintenance of essential records and data. The State Parole Board and its District Parole Offices work in partnership with community-based programs to develop and maintain a continuum of treatment, support services and supervision that encourage and aid offenders in completing their supervision in the community. Another positive program is the

State Parole Board's Veteran Offender Reentry Initiative which is a collaboration with the *Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA)* to assist veteran offenders who have served our country with dignity but have had difficulty in adjusting to civilian life.

This past January, *The National Governors Association's (NGA) Center for Best Practices*, in partnership with the *National Parole Resource Center (NPRC)*, officially selected New Jersey, along with Pennsylvania and Virginia, to participate in a project where the three states will receive technical assistance to address paroling strategies in 2019. Two key staffers from the New Jersey State Parole Board, Executive Director Steven Tallard and David Wolfsgruber, assistant director of community programs, will partake in a learning collaborative along with several state departments involved in supporting formerly incarcerated individuals, the Office of the Governor, and key criminal justice stakeholders. This joint mission will assist in developing evidence-based recommendations for supporting and firming up parole decision-making, policies, and practices to ensure people returning to their communities have the services and supports needed for successful reentry. The New Jersey State Parole Board is honored to be a part of this collaboration and up to the task of cooperating and providing its best practices to the *NGA*, which will invariably help strengthen paroling procedures.

On September 21, 2017, the State Parole Board was awarded a grant in the amount of \$600,000.00 under the auspices of the *United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance Swift, Certain and Fair (SCF) Supervision Program*. The State Parole Board's SCF Supervision Program provides up to 75 opioid-involved supervised offenders living in Ocean County with appropriate targeted services to divert them from a return to prison. This will be accomplished by managing their underlying addictions with a combination of behavioral therapy, substance abuse treatment, Certified Peer Recovery Specialists and medication-assisted treatment. The State Parole Board will work closely with a Program Coordinator employed by the *NJ Reentry Corporation* to support the successful community reintegration of supervised offenders enrolled in the grant program during their recovery process.

The State Parole Board is working on the third year of a three-year federal grant. The \$932,805 grant from the *Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA)* funds the Second Chance Act (SCA) Demonstration and Implementation program in Union County. The grant award supports the implementation of the Parole Reentry Program in Union County— designed to serve medium to high-risk parolees returning to the county by providing services to support their reentry. The State Parole Board partnered with the *Union County Department of Human Services* to provide case management and to contract with housing and mental health providers. The State Parole Board contracted with community program provider *The GEO Group* who worked with participants in the program to conduct assessments for placement into vocational and education programs, as well as providing employment services to participants working closely with employers and one-stop services for employment opportunities. The State Parole Board applied for and received approval for a six-month extension. The program recently concluded on April 1, 2019.

In closing, the State Parole Board will continue to collaborate with federal, state, and local law enforcement as well as other relevant agencies, and also work diligently to maximize the use of technology in its implementation of evidence-based best practices in the field of community

supervision. These innovative efforts further promote public safety and seek to improve the quality of community-based programs to provide every available opportunity for successful offender reintegration.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I welcome any questions at this time.