

PATRICK

HOPE

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DELEGATES HOPE AND KORY ADDRESS VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS: SALARIES AND WORKING CONDITIONS

Richmond – Today, Delegate Patrick Hope (VA-47) was joined by Delegate Kaye Kory (VA-38), Don Bailer, and three Virginia Correctional Officers to talk about salaries and working conditions across the Commonwealth. Our Correctional Officers are among the lowest paid public safety workers in Virginia despite having one of the most dangerous jobs. Risking their lives every day, these dedicated workers have a starting salary 13.1% below the starting salary for Officers in regional jails and 29% below the starting salary for Virginia State Police Officers. After compelling testimony of three officers struggling with multiple jobs and needing public assistance to feed, care and insure their children, Hope said, "I have seen firsthand Correctional Officers putting their lives on the line, they deserve to be treated fairly. Virginia needs to do more to close this gap between Correctional Officers and the rest of law enforcement. Not doing so not only places their lives in even greater danger but also the offenders entrusted in their care as well as the public at large."

Delegate Kaye Kory (VA-38) added "We rely on our correctional officers to protect our society by ensuring that convicted criminals pay their debts to society until their sentences are served. These public safety officers give 110% every working day. They deserve fair pay and fair employment practices." She concludes, "Virginia pays these brave men and women at a rate that is ranked 48th in the nation. This is unacceptable. The General Assembly must pay these officers a living wage."

Don Bailer, representing the National Coalition of Public Safety Officers - Virginia Chapter said "We want Correctional Officers to be recognized by the legislature because they are in desperate need of help from the General Assembly Members. Budget cuts, high turnover, understaffing, and low wages are just a few of the deficiencies. These officers perform one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs in our society, carrying with it the highest stress levels, highest mortality rates, and the highest suicide rates of all other professions. The average life expectancy of a Correctional Officer after retirement is only eighteen months. Their situation is more critical now than it has ever been. When they go to work, they are not safe due to

understaffing and many of the officers need to supplement their low wages with two and three jobs and/or public assistance. We are only asking for the same dignity and respect as other public safety officers across our Commonwealth. "

Patrick A. Hope is a Member of the Virginia General Assembly as the Delegate from the 47th District representing part of Arlington County. He serves on the House Health, Welfare, and Institutions, Courts of Justice, and Militia, Police and Public Safety Committees.

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