



Monroe County Legislature

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Via Electronic Mail

County Executive Adam Bello
Monroe County Office Building
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County Executive Bello,

Monroe County's Office of Probation-Community Corrections plays a vital role in public safety. Recently, news reports have raised questions about electronic monitoring of individuals under the department's supervision. I support the hardworking probation staff and seek to gain understanding and information as it relates to the County's responsibilities and practices.

The incidents below are the basis for my questions:

- On August 27, Walter Balkum, 49, allegedly beat his former partner to death in her Hazelwood Terrace home. Several days before, he appeared in court where the judge granted a request to remove his ankle monitor. [Court transcripts obtained by 13WHAM](#) indicate the judge did not know the monitoring system was intended for home confinement purposes, and seemed unaware that the monitoring system was not equipped with GPS. Balkum's attorney told 13WHAM, "If your ankle monitors don't have GPS, they are more or less useless."

[News10NBC also obtained the transcripts](#), and quoted the judge as saying, "What I'm hearing with Monroe County Pretrial — and I know it's been an issue — is that there's no GPS." The probation officer responded, "The only type of home monitoring that we do is home confinement. **We have no GPS.**"

Meantime, a County spokesman told both outlets that GPS is available upon court order.

- In March 2023, a group of teens was arrested for allegedly stealing a car in Greece. [13WHAM reported](#), "Police say one of the boys was on probation for a prior stolen vehicle charge and was wearing an ankle monitor at the time of his arrest."
- In September 2023, a group of young people was arrested after a police chase in a stolen vehicle. [News 8 reported](#), "Prior to these arrests, the 14-year-old had an outstanding probation warrant and an ankle monitor for a prior charge of first-degree robbery."
- Last month, [News 10 NBC reported](#) about a car theft detail resulting in numerous arrests, saying, "Those arrested range from ages 14 to 38. Multiple people arrested had outstanding warrants, previous convictions, and one had an ankle monitor."

These events raise concerns about the use and limitations of electronic monitoring. I am seeking to understand the following:

Statistics

- How many people are on electronic monitoring?
- How many are adults and how many are juveniles?
- Is there data on how many people are arrested while on electronic monitoring?

Devices

- How many devices does Monroe County own?
- What is the make of these devices?
- How old are these devices?
- Are the devices capable of GPS tracking?
- What percentage of the devices Monroe County owns are capable of GPS tracking?

Use

- What is the overall purpose of electronic monitoring?
- What is the response when a monitor is activated?
- How is the monitoring data used to supervise people?
- The 2024 budget has this line: “There is also a plan to implement the addition of 24/7 electronic monitoring with active response protocol to increase compliance with conditions of probation.” Can you give details of this plan and how it’s going?

Resources

- What is the cost associated with purchase, maintenance and monitoring these devices?
- Is there dedicated staff to electronic monitoring?
- Does the department have enough staff to monitor the devices?
- As you know, I have questioned the use of probation officers on your security detail. Has that practice continued in 2024?

I realize this letter has requested a lot of data and information. It may be easier to set up a presentation with legislators in chambers, which would be open to the public. I am available to meet to discuss these issues, as well. I look forward to a response and learning more about electronic monitoring. We all share the same goal of making sure Monroe County is safe and our children can thrive.

Sincerely,



Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 17