



Office of **SHERIFF OF BELTRAMI COUNTY**

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Jason Riggs, Sheriff

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To: Chairman Fue Lee and Members of the House Capital Investment Committee

On behalf of Beltrami County, we are disappointed in the lack of inclusion of critically important local capital investment projects, and more specifically Beltrami County's request contained in SF 2714/HF 2229 which would help to fund the construction of an urgently needed new county jail.

The Beltrami County Jail is licensed to operate a secure adult detention facility through the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). The DOC has ordered Beltrami County to reduce its operating capacity due to inadequate facilities and physical plant requirements. The result of this mandated reduction is Beltrami County being forced to house inmates at other County Jails around the state at significant expense to Beltrami County taxpayers.

In addition, the safety of our staff and inmates has become a paramount concern. The Beltrami County Correctional Facility ranks 2nd in the State for assaults on staff, largely due to the types of inmates housed and the design of the current facility.

In 2023, the State Legislature authorized a local sales tax for Beltrami County to generate funding for the new correctional facility. In November of 2023, county voters approved the referendum authorizing the local sales tax to be administered county wide on taxable purchases. The purpose of the capital investment request is to help our county offset at least a portion of the financial burden to construct this facility – a facility which benefits the entire State of Minnesota.

Beltrami County is the 3rd largest county in Minnesota with a large service area and a small tax base (only 1/3 of the properties in the County are taxable). Beltrami County is the 2nd poorest county in the State with a poverty rate of 20%. The County contains two Native American Sovereign Nations, and Native Americans make up approximately 65% of the Correctional Facility population. Beltrami County has received overwhelming support from its regional partners for the design and construction of a new correctional facility. These partners include:

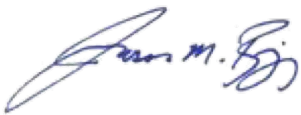
- Cass County Board
- Clearwater County Board
- Red Lake Nation Director of Public Safety
- Mahnomen County Board
- Itasca County Sheriff
- MN DOD District Supervisor
- Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians Tribal Chairman
- Hubbard County Sheriff

Our intent is to construct a new 242-bed correctional facility. The design will be purposely planned for the projected number of inmates, the types of inmates that would be housed and required services based upon their risks and needs, the desired operational philosophy, the desired housing unit sizes and configurations, and have program spaces that meet the cultural needs of all inmates.

For all these reasons, we urge the committee to include funding that will help Beltrami County offset the financial impact to its local taxpayers, for a facility that was mandated by the State and clearly will benefit Minnesotans well beyond the borders of our county.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason M. Riggs". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "R".

Jason Riggs, Beltrami County Sheriff