



OFFICE OF THE HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 16, 2022

Chairs, House Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Bld.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chairs, Senate Finance Committee
Minnesota Senate Building
95 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Re: Budget Request for the Attorney General's Enhanced Criminal Enforcement and Initiatives budget document submitted by the Attorney General.

I rise to support the budget request of the Attorney General for enhanced criminal enforcement. I speak as a former Vice Chair of the Senate Finance Committee (1987-1990) and from my present position as Hennepin County Attorney. Additional funds are critical if the Attorney General is to fulfill his duties assisting in the fight for justice and to reduce crime.

Historically the Attorney General supported smaller counties with the prosecution of major crimes as well as providing leadership on statewide crime fighting efforts. In 1999, the Attorney General moved away from this role unfortunately leaving the larger Minnesota counties the challenge of fulfilling these duties. We are pleased Attorney General Keith Ellison is returning to this key role of providing state-wide leadership in criminal justice matters.

In addition, today the demands upon the Attorney General have expanded to helping the larger counties in prosecuting the very expensive and difficult police use of force cases such as those who took George Floyd's life. The Attorney General's office has continued to partner with the Hennepin County Attorney's Office on officer involved shooting cases since the prosecution of Derek Chauvin. The Attorney General's office cannot continue to do these challenging cases with existing staff.

Moreover, other County Attorneys have increasingly responded to many in the community who feel that the local county attorney in whose jurisdiction the shooting of civilians by police officers took place are not best suited to prosecute such crimes. Accordingly, these very difficult cases have been placed with the Attorney General's Office often necessitating extensive assistance from a variety of volunteers or other County Attorney's criminal staffs.

Finally, the present Attorney General has increasingly played a critical role in crime reduction and other Criminal Justice Reform issues again, with no additional financial support.

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office supports fully funding the Attorney General's request. If the legislature wants to take a critical step towards truly supporting critical prosecution needs and leadership critical for essential criminal justice reforms, this budget request must be granted.

I stand prepared to elaborate further on these needs if your committees would like further testimony.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael O. Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN
Hennepin County Attorney