

HENNEPIN COUNTY

ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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Representative Jamie Becker-Finn
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Chair Becker-Finn:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my support for the amendment to HF 1580 that would increase juror compensation.

Participating on a jury is an impossible burden for far too many in Minnesota because they can't afford it. At \$20 per day, jury service quickly becomes untenable for working class Minnesotans who must take time off work, often without pay, and/or arrange for unbudgeted child care. The end result is juries that are not fully representative of our communities. The problem can have effects along both class and racial lines.

The data bears out that there is a demonstrable lack of diversity in juries statewide. For example, a judge in the Fourth Judicial District recently found that Black Hennepin County residents comprise 14.2% of the population but constitute only 6.9% of the district's jury pools. Similarly, an Inforum News report recently found that, in Olmsted County, the percentage of Black residents in the jury pool is 59% less than would be expected and in Rice County, the percentage of Hispanic residents in the jury pool is 79% less than would be expected. These disparities open cases to legal challenges.

Many who have studied this issue, including the Center for Jury Studies and National Center for State Courts, agree that increasing juror pay can enhance representation on juries. They have found courts with jury pay that exceeds the national average have significantly lower excusal rates than courts whose juror pay is lower than the national average.

Increasing jury pay also has the added benefit of increasing the legitimacy in our legal system. When potential jurors are compensated adequately for their time and effort, they are more likely to take their role seriously and participate actively in the proceedings. National experts have found that when jurors feel that their time and contributions are valued, they are more likely to have faith in the judiciary and the fairness of the system overall.

The amendment to HF 1580, which would raise jury pay to \$50 an hour, would allow Minnesota to join North Dakota as the national leader in jury compensation. This is a critical step toward building a more representative, and fair judicial system.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Moriarty
Hennepin County Attorney