



February 8, 2023

Members of the Minnesota State Legislature
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of H.F. 1406 – Aiding and Abetting Felony Murder Law Reform

Members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) is writing in support of H.F. 1406 – aiding and abetting felony murder reform. We are a statewide coalition working to end relationship abuse with 80 member programs who provide advocacy and services to domestic and sexual violence victim/survivors in all 87 Minnesota counties.

Felony murder laws hold people liable for murder if they participated in a felony that resulted in someone's death. When combined with aiding and abetting, anyone involved in the felony that led to the person's death can be convicted of murder. And that can lead to extremely punitive sentences in Minnesota – including a life sentence without parole. These laws impose sentences associated with murder on people who neither intended to kill, anticipated a death, or even participated in the killing. We know that this can have a devastating impact on survivors of domestic violence, who can be coerced or forced into criminal activity, or criminalized for acts of survival.

Research shows that felony murder laws have particularly adverse impacts on people of color, young people, and women. In Minnesota, one-third of individuals incarcerated for murder in 2021 were convicted under the felony murder doctrine. According to The Sentencing Project, over half of Minnesotans charged with aiding and abetting felony murder in recent years were age 25 or younger. In Ramsey and Hennepin Counties, people of color accounted for 80% of second-degree felony murder convictions between 2012 and 2018. Statewide, just over half (54%) of those with felony murder convictions in Minnesota were Black and 10% were American Indian or Alaskan Native in 2021.

Limiting felony murder charges to people who committed the killing and those who directly aided them is an important reform that will work to hold those responsible for murder accountable – rather than those who may have been at the wrong place at the wrong time, or navigating domestic abuse at the time of the offense. We urge you to support H.F. 1406 and reform Minnesota's aiding and abetting felony murder laws.

Sincerely,

Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director
Violence Free Minnesota

Shenika Chambers
Policy Program Manager
Violence Free Minnesota