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## Office of the Commissioner

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April 20, 2022

RE: HF 1683, the Omnibus House Transportation bill

Dear Chair Moran and Ways and Means Committee Members,

I am writing today in support of HF 1683, the Omnibus House Transportation bill. I will also relay a few issues that I believe need to be addressed.

Thank you for including critical investments in the Department of Public Safety (DPS) in this bill, including a majority of Governor Walz's supplemental budget and policy recommendations, making important investments in the State Patrol, Office of Traffic Safety, Driver and Vehicle Services and the Department as a whole. These investments include:

- Funding the deficiency requests for both State Patrol and Department of Vehicle Services (DVS). As it relates to DVS, this would include vehicles service operations for the production and mailing of vehicle plates and tabs to Minnesotans, Deputy Registrars and Dealers.
- This bill also allows for and provides funding for expanding the eligible circumstances for which families of first responders who die in the line of duty can receive death benefits to include cancer or post-traumatic stress disorder that is linked to their service.
- Funding the increase in soft body armor as the program is currently out of funding and has a backlog of requests. This would include a \$400k investment in FY22, \$205k in FY23 and \$205k into the future.
- As it relates to the Office of Pipeline Safety, this bill allows Minnesota statute to match federal law on the maximum on fines to ensure that the state does not continue to get flagged on its audit and potentially lose federal funds. In addition to this, HF 1683 updates reporting requirements on damages and on-time performance.
- This bill also supports the creation and operation of the Traffic Safety Advisory Council. This will bring together a wide group of roadway users to help make Minnesota's roadways safer. This group will lead the Towards Zero Death (TZD) group, while also having input on additional work completed by the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).
- Included in this bill are recommendations from the independent expert review (IER) by Rick King. I believe that some of the recommendations made by Rick King and his team can have a big impact on how Minnesotans interact with DVS. Some items that are included in this bill, as recommended by the review are the inclusion of authorizing deputy registrars to issue various

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driving and crash records to customers, and waiving the knowledge test for those with a driver's license issued by another state. This bill also allows for DVS to install security cameras at exam stations as the review highlighted security concerns of DVS staff.

- This bill also allows for increased data auditing capacity at DVS for the MNDRIVE system. This will help ensure DVS can maintain the proper use, safety and security of all information held in MNDRIVE.
- The changes in this bill around salvage vehicles and prior salvage title brands will ensure better disclosure and customer awareness of salvaged vehicles and closes loopholes that allowed for title washing.
- I am also pleased that this bill includes funding for the State Patrol's commercial vehicle enforcement efforts. This will allow the State Patrol to access new federal funds and help improve the safety on our roadways.
- This bill also includes important policy updates like allowing for school buses to be used in emergency evacuation situations. It allows Minnesotans to use their internet bill as a utility bill when applying for a REAL ID, and updates dealer inspections conducted by DVS to make them more efficient.

Although this bill contains many items that I am grateful for, there are a few outstanding issues that DPS continues to have concerns regarding.

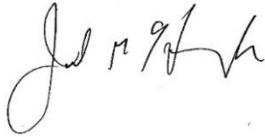
- This bill does not include the funding for a replacement State Patrol helicopter, nor the increase to the base budget to support additional aviation assistance to Minnesota, as requested by DPS. I see this as a very important issue, as the upgraded helicopter will provide additional rescue capability across all of Minnesota as well as increased traffic and public safety support. State Patrol helicopters have proven to be vital in tracking and arresting criminals who are involved in the increase in crime we have been seeing recently.
- Although this item was originally included in earlier engrossments, the most recent version of the bill has omitted the ability for DVS to collect race and ethnicity data, voluntarily, from those who renew their license. This data was intended to be used by the Office of Traffic Safety to conduct studies based on these factors.
- One item included from the IER that DPS has an issue with is fee sharing of State funds to deputy registrars. Although I believe that deputy registrars should be paid fairly, I do not believe that the State needs to be subsidizing private businesses and local governments for work completed entirely by State agencies. This fee sharing model will drain state resources and limit the services DVS can provide in future years.
- Finally, a key item from the IER that was not included that would have a significant impact on DVS is allowing for fulfillment expenses for all license plate, registration sticker and renewal notices to be funded from a direct appropriation based on the number of transactions

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DVS completes and the true cost of fulfillment, rather than from their general operating budget. This direct appropriation approach would solve the root cause of the current DVS deficiency.

I am confident we can continue to work together to find a resolution to these issues. The Department of Public Safety serves all communities to build a safer Minnesota. Thank you for making the investments to move this mission forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Harrington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "H".

John M. Harrington  
Commissioner- Department of Public Safety