



March 8, 2021

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am sorry I am not physically here to present this testimony verbally; I am out on an unexpected medical leave.

Two years ago, we asked you to create a multidisciplinary group that included the voices of survivors and people from marginalized communities, to examine and make recommendations to change and modernize Minnesota's Criminal Sexual Conduct statutes.

We just spent 18 months doing exactly that. I have spent hours with an incredible group of caring, knowledgeable people talking about all of the ways in which Minnesota's CSC statutes impact the lives of victims and survivors. I watched seasoned professionals quiet themselves to listen to those with lived experiences. And I watched people with lived experiences learn more about the very complicated statutes that have so impacted their lives – often not for the better.

Ever present in our conversations were the realities of disparities within our criminal justice system. Disparities are often talked about as impacting defendants – which they do – but they also impact survivors who want or need to engage with this system. So while defendants were part of the conversation, we centered our work on the impacts on survivors.

We definitely did not always agree, but the breadth of experience on the work group was a benefit. Not only survivors and advocates, but also law enforcement, public defenders, the private defense bar, treatment providers, and others.

We talked about the problems that survivors face – over and over – and whether there were ways to change Minnesota's CSC statutes to fix some of those problems without furthering disparities. To be clear – this is how the majority of conversations were framed:

- 1) What is the problem that survivors are bringing up over and over?
- 2) Is it something that could be impacted by amending the CSC statutes?
- 3) Is there a way to do make those amendments without furthering disparities?

I'm not going to sit here and tell you that this report – and this bill – is perfect. Is anything perfect? No. But this bill is a strong step towards a more modern, thoughtful statutory scheme focused on the most predatory behaviors.

I want to thank Representatives Moller and O'Neill, who have supported this work every step of the way. And I'd like to take a moment to remember Senator Relph, who championed this work in the Senate. We appreciate Senator Senjem following in his footsteps.

You'll find organizational letters of support in your handouts, as well as an anonymous letter from a survivor. I can tell you that I've been contacted by many more survivors than those letters reflect – all with stories of how their situations would have played out very differently if the recommendations from this work group were already law.

Today you'll hear from survivors and members of the steering committee. And then it will be your turn – passing this bill moves us one more step closer.

Thank you for the support.

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