



**Central Office**

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April 14, 2021

Representative Rena Moran  
Chair, House Ways and Means Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives  
449 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
St Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Moran:

I am writing to express my support for Chair Mariani's House Public Safety Omnibus bill, HF 1078. I believe that the bill reflects responsible fiscal stewardship and strong leadership on critical criminal justice reform issues.

I recognize that the task before Chair Mariani and the members of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Policy and Finance Committee was challenging. Given the range of criminal justice system needs, developing a sound budget that serves the public safety interests of all Minnesotans is no simple feat. I am incredibly grateful that HF 1078 fully funds the Department of Corrections' (DOC) operating adjustment, base-level technology funding, along with so many of the provisions included in the Governor's COVID-19 Recovery Budget. I am immensely appreciative of the committee's support for investments in critical initiatives, including: the "Healthy Start Act" for pregnant incarcerated mothers and their newborns, release planning and homelessness mitigation services for individuals releasing from prison into our communities, enhanced standards and oversight for licensed local correctional facilities, creating a juvenile justice data repository along with other key juvenile justice reform measures, creation of an "Indeterminate Sentence Release Board" to make parole determinations in life sentence cases, funding for directing the development of a legislative recommendations report for sustainable and equitable funding of the state's probation delivery systems, and the system changing "Minnesota Rehabilitation & Reinvestment Act" proposal.

I also appreciate that Chair Mariani's omnibus budget bill includes essential policy initiatives designed to advance human rights and community safety, particularly during this time of reckoning. HF 1078 aligns with the DOC's vision of achieving justice through promotion of racial equity, restoration from harm, and community connectedness. The DOC supports the various policy proposals included in this bill, such as prohibiting strip searches of youth in detention facilities, creating alternatives to youth arrest, raising the age of delinquency and detention to 13 to better serve children in need of protection or services, strengthening reporting obligations to the legislature around state prison security and extended jurisdiction juveniles, incorporating consideration of veteran experiences and traumatic brain injury into sentencing practices, and addressing the substantial gaps in Minnesota's criminal sexual conduct statutory framework to better serve victim survivors, to name a few. House File 1078 is a remarkable and comprehensive bill put forth during a time when strong leadership is desperately needed. This bill is the work of many voices and the culmination of hundreds of hours of thoughtful review, debate, and stakeholder engagement.

I also understand that lawmakers have difficult decisions to make when considering the various budget proposals that are before your committee. I would be remiss not to raise my concerns about the use of the cash balance in the DOC's correctional industries program (MINNCOR) account. As you may know, the legislature established MINNCOR program, "for the purpose of providing adequate, regular and suitable employment, educational training, and to aid" incarcerated individuals (M.S. 241.27) and mandated that MINNCOR be financially self-sufficient. As such, depletion of the \$6.265 million reserves of MINNCOR would devastate the program and make its viability virtually impossible. If MINNCOR were forced to cease operations, approximately 120 full-time employees and 1,400 incarcerated people would be impacted.

Please know that we are committed to working with you and Chair Mariani to address these concerns as final decisions are made on the budget. Chair Mariani's commitment to racial and geographic equity is reflected in H.F. 1078, which offers support for incarcerated and other system-involved people, crime victims, agency staff, and community members in every corner of our state, who rightly expect fulfillment of the DOC mission - transforming lives for a safer Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Schnell", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Schnell  
Commissioner, Department of Corrections