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April 14, 2021

Dear Chair Moran and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

A tragedy has occurred in our community. All eyes are again on Minnesota for a death that didn't have to happen. Policy changes are well and good but it is investment that will turn the tide here. Investment in our youth. Investment in stable housing. Investment in training. Investment in a mental health system that works for first responders and community members.

For the Department of Public Safety budget, I implore you to invest in our Juvenile Justice Unit. Do not wait until the system has captured our children, invest in the prevention efforts that disrupt the cycle of violence in our homes and communities.

I also ask you make the investment in the 24/7 fusion center. We all want peaceful protestors, disruptors in the form of anarchists, arsonists and white supremacists are a very real and present threat to peaceful demonstrations here in Minnesota. We must have the appropriate resources to meet this threat and the space to facilitate collaboration amongst our partners.

The depth and breadth of the grant opportunities you fund in this budget with ongoing funding are absolutely critical to reducing violence in communities throughout Minnesota. There is no one size fits all solution but together these programs will make a difference in Minnesotans lives and improve the safety of our communities.

Finally, this bill includes important reform efforts that pushes the state to lean forward into envisioning a public safety strategy that looks and feels different. Change is hard and produces anxiety – we can acknowledge that - however the status quo cannot stand.

I look forward to working with the House and Senate in putting together a public safety package that invests in the infrastructure in place, moves forward the evolution of policing and provides new opportunities to engage with our youth to break the cycle of violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Harrington".

John M. Harrington
Commissioner- Department of Public Safety