



## Office of the Commissioner

445 Minnesota Street • Suite 1000 • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-5100

Phone: 651.201.7160 • Fax: 651.297.5728 • TTY: 651.282.6555

[dps.mn.gov](http://dps.mn.gov)

April 12, 2023

Chair Marty and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

The Department of Public Safety works to serve all communities to build a safer Minnesota. The critical investments included in the Governor and Lt. Governor's public safety budget recommendations come from community feedback and public safety professionals. In order to build a safer Minnesota we need ongoing investments in prevention, intervention, and enforcement. I am grateful for the important public safety investments already in Senate File 2909 and I look forward to working with the Senate to help address areas where future investments could be made.

The investments in this bill allow us to continue our current services including providing ongoing funding for the BCA Force Investigations Unit (FIU). The FIU provides a critical resource as an independent investigative body for many high-profile and challenging cases including Police Use of Deadly Force, Criminal Sexual Conduct Involving Peace Officers, Criminal Sexual Conduct Involving Minnesota National Guard Members; and Conflict of Interest Investigations.

We are grateful this bill returns the fire safety surcharge to 0.65% to support firefighters and fire safety needs across Minnesota. This additional funding for the Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education will bring some relief to local municipality budgets and helps ensure that their firefighters are trained and prepared to keep their communities safe. The state emergency response teams are the state's resource that go to work when the worst situations happen in any community across the state from hazardous materials spills to bombs to collapsed structures to rescues from our Minnesota Air Rescue Team, thank you for funding these critical teams

Cybersecurity and IT Infrastructure at the BCA and Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement (AGE) division while not as flashy as some projects they are critical. AGE for instance needs an upgrade to continue offering criminal history background checks to a wide group of stakeholders in the gambling industry – a must provide service. The BCA's Cybersecurity and IT Infrastructure funding addresses critical cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities to BCA systems, while also meeting FBI requirements and upgrading essential IT infrastructure and systems. Security threats from hackers and malware attacks continue to grow exponentially. We saw it again this week with the Rochester School District. We've been taking bites at this request since the 2019 legislative session, now is the time to finish this ask. Not making these basic investments will put sensitive criminal justice data on individuals at risk, and the BCA will continue to fall behind in ensuring the security of the data.

- Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement
- Bureau of Criminal Apprehension
- Driver and Vehicle Services
- Emergency Communication Networks
- Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Minnesota State Patrol
- Office of Communications
- Office of Justice Programs
- Office of Pipeline Safety
- Office of Traffic Safety
- State Fire Marshal

April 12, 2023

Thank you for supporting the critical work of the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) Office. This investment will ensure the office can meet its statutory obligations. We also appreciate the creation of the MMIR fund to help locate missing individuals. While it is exciting to establish a first in the nation Missing and Murdered African American Women and Girls (MMAAW) office to stop the epidemic of violence against Black women and girls as well as provide grant funding to organizations supporting the safety and success of Black women and girls. However, the reduction in funds may limit the ability of the MMAAW office to meet all of the statutory obligations set for the office.

Minnesota is a leader in the 911 space. Updating our 403 statutes to ensure we are ready for the Next Generation of 911 will help ensure we continue to be. DPS has worked with the Statewide Emergency Communications Board and is still working with niche stakeholders to make some final tweaks to the language but the statutory update and \$7 million in funding for local Public Safety Answering Points will help keep Minnesotans safe now and into the future.

I understand that the budget target included more one-time money than ongoing funding into future years and that can create challenges. I am grateful that you acknowledge the importance of our work by providing funding as you were able. I look forward to working with you to find areas where one-time or reduced funding can work and where ongoing or full funding is necessary. In particular, we will need to address the fiscal cliffs for staffing resources.

The gap in federal VOCA funds would be devastating to Minnesota non-profits dedicated to working with crime victims throughout the state without the investment you're making. However, this investment needs to be ongoing to avoid a fiscal cliff in the future and to be able to provide ongoing stable support for our providers and in turn the victim-survivors across the state. The same is true for crime victim services grant funding.

One-time funding limits the ability to establish programs statewide on a sustained basis. Domestic and Sexual Violence Housing, Community Crime Prevention grants youth services funding like YIP, delinquency prevention programming, OJP's Youth Justice Office, and MN Heals show the depth and breadth of grant opportunities covered and highlight that there is no one size fits all solution but rather together these programs will make an impact.

Funding for additional OJP staffing is critical to their ability to meet the needs of Minnesotans, whether through grant management, crime victim assistance, data analysis, or education and training. Thank you for the recognition of the critical work this division does. However, the reduction in funding limits the ability of the Office to meet the current services required and expected by Minnesotans.

The BCA's Violent Reduction Strategy Initiative is needed funding and this bill makes a strong partial investment. The work we are currently doing is impactful and without ongoing funding, this work will not be able to continue. The BCA has assigned more than 10% of its agents to violent crime reduction strategies in Minneapolis and the greater Twin Cities Area since April of 2022. During this time, the BCA, working with local and federal partners has:

- opened 187 cases,
- seized 424 firearms,
- seized 131,122 fentanyl pills,
- seized 10 kilograms of heroin,
- seized 9,979 grams of powder fentanyl,
- seized 10.5 kilograms of cocaine,
- seized 99 pounds of methamphetamine, and
- arrested over 800 people wanted for violent crimes such as shootings, homicides, and weapons trafficking.

The analytical component of this ask is an ongoing need for Minnesota. Beyond the recent spike in violent crime, the FBI continues to say the biggest threat to the United States remains homegrown violent extremists who target our faith based institutions, schools, and mass gathering events like festivals and sporting events. This investment improves our capability for threat management as well as supports our violent crime investigators.

DPS's Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division is understaffed to meet the needs of local entities and federal requirements. Funding provided in this bill will help hire some of the needed staff to monitor grants, provide training, and meet federal requirements but we ask that fully funding the request be considered. DPS strongly supports the Supplemental Nonprofit Security grants and support for local emergency management grants provided funding in this bill.

The national rise in "swatting" calls to our schools by foreign actors is a troubling trend and we must work to find ways to adapt. Investing in school safety center staff will allow us to work directly with schools across Minnesota on the safety needs they've identified to improve their safety plans. We would ask the committee to look at fully funding this request.

Creating a new BCA State Fraud Unit provides state agencies with a dedicated resource to report suspected criminal fraud and is a commitment to protecting state resources. From programs like unemployment insurance, medical assistance, COVID relief, childcare assistance, and others, the state of Minnesota distributes billions of dollars to aid communities and individuals in Minnesota. This approach will focus resources to disrupt significant fraudulent activity and hold those accountable who wish to prey upon state programs designed to assist Minnesotans in need.

Thank you for the strong investment that recognizes that human trafficking (both sex and labor) is a significant issue affecting children, youth, and adults. Due to the state's efforts to strengthen its human trafficking laws, more is known about the extent of human trafficking in Minnesota. Currently, there are not enough grant funds to fund the Minnesota Human Trafficking Investigator Task Force, the only state-wide task force, adequately to meet the needs and demands placed on the MNHITF and ensure adequate funding for local task forces. Direct funding to this task force while maintaining the grant funding at OJP would create capacity for a coordinated statewide approach that would best address human trafficking and allow the task force to focus not only on sex trafficking but also address labor trafficking. Funding this task force also allows agents in the BCA Predatory Crimes Section to dedicate more time to investigate child sexual abuse material cases. Child sexual abuse material tips have dramatically risen in Minnesota in recent years going from around 3000 tips in 2019 to nearly 7500 in 2022. In addition, having the ability for the Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, funded in a previous legislative session, to serve alongside the BCA Task Force enhances both training and outreach opportunities.

The Walz-Flanagan public safety budget includes a critical investment to help decrease forensic evidence examination turnaround times for all violent crimes. The surge in violent crime in Minnesota has had significant impacts on the turnaround times for all forensic evidence. This said, we agree that existing turnaround times are unacceptable, which is why we propose funding to establish a goal of a 30-day turnaround time for all forensic examinations. We estimate at the current funding level in the bill turnaround times we be 120 days. I must also raise concern that the accompanying turnaround time policy language only covers sexual assault examination kits and would exclude other violent crimes like domestic assault, homicides, and non-fatal shootings. We are concerned this approach will impact other violent crime turnaround times. For example, in the last 2 years, we've seen 37 homicides and 1,025 aggravated assaults with a firearm involving juveniles. This is why the approach in the Governor and Lt. Governor's budget covers all forms of violent crime. Moving forward, we are committed to continued

April 12, 2023

conversations with you, legislative leaders, and survivors to find a solution that will reduce turnaround times for violent crime and improve transparency and outcomes throughout the process.

DPS has heard from community members, stakeholders, and law enforcement members about the importance of all peace officers having body-worn cameras. It is not common for everyone involved to be looking for the same solution in the public safety space but on this, there is strong alignment. I believe that the state can help make body-worn cameras a reality in every community. The one-time investment made in this bill would be a good start.

Taking care of our first responders is an area of high importance to me. So thank you for the partial funding of the first responder wellness office. It is critical that we fully invest in the care of our emergency and first responders in Minnesota. The expansion and funding for the soft body armor program will help keep peace officers, firefighters, and emergency medical services professionals safer in Minnesota. DPS currently receives more requests for reimbursements than the soft body armor reimbursement and line of duty death accounts can support, additional ongoing funding is needed. DPS is also asking to expand the line-of-duty death benefit to include cancer-related deaths for firefighters and PTSD-related suicide deaths for all first responders an important acknowledgment of risks faced by first responders every day.

I understand the committee can only work within its budget target, but I do want to call out one item that was not included in SF 2909. It is the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension's goal to meet and exceed expectations for law enforcement agencies throughout the United States while increasing transparency and building community relationships. Funding for CALEA Accreditation will aid in these goals while also providing for additional accountability and auditing as well as a resource for advice and guidance.

I am confident we can continue to work together to find a resolution to these issues. The Department of Public Safety works to serve 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 that reads "Bob Jacobson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bob Jacobson  
Commissioner Department of Public Safety