



The
CENTER for
VICTIMS of
TORTURE

January 31, 2023

Dear Chair Latz and the Committee:

Founded in 1985, the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) is a non-profit organization that is headquartered in Minnesota and has operations in the U.S., Africa and the Middle East. We extend rehabilitative care to survivors of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (CIDT); build the capacity of colleague torture rehabilitation programs and human rights defenders worldwide; and engage in advocacy aimed at ending torture and CIDT and supporting the rehabilitation of survivors.

Our Healing, Incarceration, and Policing Program advocates for legislation that uplifts and supports our clients and communities in Minnesota, while increasing equity and accountability in our public safety infrastructure. We are committed to achieving public safety that prioritizes the needs of our communities, including prioritizing ethical policing practices, and ensuring that police departments rectify ongoing patterns and practices of excessive force within departments. As such, CVT supports SF 477 to ensure that officers who may intercede against or report another officer's/employee's excessive use of force will be protected from possible retaliation. This legislation is an important step towards changing the culture of police departments, increasing the safety of community members, while encouraging officers and police departments to prioritize humane policing.

As seen in the Minnesota Department of Human Rights Investigation into the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD), patterns and practices of excessive force are forged by the culture of police departments. MPD officers were continuously found to be protecting each other, over the public, by not interceding or reporting instances of excessive force. Though this report is specific to MPD, national research and our work with various communities in Minnesota support that these patterns and practices could or would be found in other parts of Minnesota as well. The use of force can be and often is a life or death scenario. To use force in an unauthorized manner or in excess violates civilians' right to life, can traumatize survivors and collective community, decimates community trust in law enforcement, adds to civil unrest, and undermines our state's public safety systems. Having a state law protecting officers willing to stand up against established department culture or higher-ranking officers to intercede or report these violations, protects Minnesotans while strengthening the ethics and credibility of our state's police departments and law enforcement agencies. We urge the Committee to pass this important legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

On behalf of CVT:

Ta'Mara Hill, Policy Officer, Healing, Incarceration, & Policing Program