

Joel A. Swanson
Chisago County Government Center
313 N. Main ST
Center City, MN

March 23, 2023

Minnesota Senate
Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 5115

Re: SF2238 - District Court Law Clerk Letter of Support

Dear Chairman Senator Latz and other Member Senators of the Committee:

I am a licensed attorney and currently serve as the law clerk to the Honorable Bridge E. Dowdal, Judge of District Court, in Chisago County, and Tenth Judicial District. Since 2005, I have served as a law clerk for three different district court judges in Anoka, Chisago, and Washington Counties. With my experience, I write in support of SF2238 and recommend the passage of the bill to increase district court law clerk's starting salaries.

Law clerks are essential to the administration of justice for the people and cases brought before the district court. While a district court judge is presiding over full calendars of hearings, a law clerk completes several professional duties including researching the law and providing an analysis with the facts of a case, drafting the judge's written decisions for issues under advisement, preparing case files for upcoming hearings, preparing bench memorandum for the judge on the issues presented in a case, and drafting a variety of other orders for the judge's review. These are in addition to managing the day-to-day requirements of the judge's caseload and chambers. Simply put, district court judges neither have the time nor resources to complete these essential duties for the just and proper administration of justice.

The current starting salary of \$57,712 for district court law clerk is far below a salary that is commensurate with the market based on a law clerk's education and professional qualifications. Law clerks have a juris doctor degree, and most are licensed attorneys. Qualified candidates who would be interested in a clerkship are facing significant student loans and higher salaries being offered from other public and private employers making recruitment and retention a significant problem for district court judges. The salary for a law clerk has not kept up with inflation, essentially meaning the current salary is worth less than the salary was when I started in 2005, which was approximately \$39,000. I have chosen to remain a career law clerk because I love the law and working with a district court judge in the administration of justice. I would have been unable to continue in this position if not for financial support of my amazing Wife.

I support SF2238 and recommend the passage of the bill to increase district court law clerk's starting salaries to a market rate.

Respectfully,



Joel A. Swanson
District Court Law Clerk