



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

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Chair Latz and members of the House Public Safety Committee,

I am writing today to highlight parts of SF 2909 that the Department of Public Safety supports and to draw your attention to specific parts where I hope we can work in partnership to address critical investments in the Governor and Lt. Governor's budget recommendations that are currently not included or at different funding levels.

I am thankful this bill provides for many of the critical investments found in Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan's budget recommendations including the resources needed for the Department of Public Safety to continue work at our current service levels. I am also pleased this bill provides full funding for the following:

- The Force Investigations Unit 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. Thank you for fully funding the continuation of this specialized unit.
- Returning the fire safety surcharge to 0.65% to support firefighters and fire safety needs across Minnesota is critical for Minnesotans as fire deaths continue to climb. This along with the additional staffing for the State Fire Marshal Division, which will be the first significant increase since 1998 should make Minnesota safer.
- We are grateful for the increased financial support of our state emergency response teams. These are the teams that go to work when the worst situation happens in any community across the state from hazardous materials spills or bombs to collapsed structures to rescues from our Minnesota Air Rescue Team.
- Expanding the line of duty death benefit to include cancer-related deaths for firefighters and PTSD-related suicide deaths for all first responders is the least we can do for public servants who risk their lives every day.
- Thank you for fully funding the Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement (AGE) division IT improvement. AGE is statutorily responsible for completing criminal history background checks on a wide range of organizations and this investment will assist in maintaining compliance.

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

- We are thankful for the investment in the BCA's critical cybersecurity and system's needs. 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. 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. The BCA has more than 30 different systems that provide this sensitive data. The BCA must upgrade the eCharging system, the audit trail system, and other basic technical infrastructure in order to maintain the security and reliability of the systems and data. The current systems and infrastructure are not sustainable as-is and need to be replaced.
- 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.
- 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 is still working with some stakeholders to tweak the language but believes the 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 money can work and where ongoing funding is necessary.

- The federal funding gap for VOCA would be devastating to Minnesota non-profits dedicated to working with crime victims throughout the state. I am grateful you are helping to fill this gap with state funding. 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 across the state.
- Thank you for funding the request for Domestic and Sexual Violence Housing. Traditional housing programs do not have advocacy training or dedicated crime victim services. Some regions of the state do not have domestic and sexual violence-specific assessments, and many have waiting lists. In addition, this funding will help increase safe housing options for individuals fleeing abusive situations. One-time funding limits the ability to establish these programs statewide on a sustained basis.
- Thank you for the incredible investment in youth funding in this bill, including but not limited to the additional funds for the critical work of the YIP program for additional investments in community-based programming, mental and chemical health programming, and anti-gang programming as well as additional funding for additional delinquency prevention programming throughout the state. We are cognizant that funding is limited, but ongoing funding for these programs is critical in supporting youth across the state.
- One-time funding for the Youth Justice Office will limit the ability to fund a research analyst to provide data analysis and research on best practices related to reducing ethnic and racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.
- 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 accounts can support. Onetime funding will create the need for DPS to return with this request in future years or face a significant shortfall.

- Thank you for the additional funds for Community Crime Prevention grants. There is a continuous need for investments in the community throughout the State and requests for these funds are double or triple the amount available. One-time funding limits the ability to establish these programs statewide on a sustained basis.
- DPS has heard from community members, stakeholders, and law enforcement members about the importance of all peace officers having a 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.
- In addition, we must support all impacted families and communities. The MN Heals proposal provides support and resources for communities after an impactful incident, such as mass shootings or natural disasters, as well as impacted families to promote healthy healing and we believe should be funded ongoing.
- The additional, ongoing funding requested for the Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education is to assist in meeting the \$9,000,000 million worth of annual reimbursement requests that cannot be met for the initial and ongoing training requirements for every fire department in Minnesota. This funding would take some of the burden off the local municipalities to ensure that their firefighters are trained and prepared to keep their communities safe. Onetime funding will help cover these costs for the next two years.

This bill also partially funds multiple priorities of the administration's budget request. Specifically:

- The Walz -Flanagan administration and DPS strongly support criminal background checks and creating extreme risk protection orders related to firearms. We believe DPS could also continue to make Minnesota safer with funding to continue our firearm safety campaign.
- The BCA's Violent Reduction Strategy Initiative is needed funding and this bill makes a strong partial investment. We would appreciate an opportunity to discuss why this proposal should be fully funded. The work we are currently doing is impactful and without this 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, 10 kilograms of heroin, 9,979 grams of powder fentanyl, 10.5 kilograms of cocaine, and 99 pounds of methamphetamine. The BCA has arrested over 800 people during this time who are wanted for violent crimes such as shootings, homicides, and weapons trafficking.
 - The analytical component of this ask is an ongoing need for Minnesota. Just last week the Anti-Defamation League announced an all-time high for antisemitic incidents across our country over the last year. We have seen numerous threats to our schools and doxing incidents claiming school shootings were occurring. We have seen a rise in hate-related incidents in our communities of color and LGBTQ+ communities. These

analytical resources are a critical ongoing resources to identify these trends, analyze who are the perpetrators, share information, and prevent attacks from occurring.

- Funding for additional OJP staffing is critical to their ability to meet the needs of Minnesotans, whether through grant funding, crime victim assistance, data, and analysis, or education and training. Thank you for the recognition of the critical work this division does. However, reducing this investment limits the ability of the Office to meet the current required and expected services.
- 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 Office to meet all of the statutory obligations set for the office.
- Thank you for the partial funding of first responder wellness. It is critical that we fully invest in the care of our emergency and first responders in Minnesota. This is an area of high importance to me and I want to work to get this fully funded.
- School violence has made headline news far too often. Additionally, 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 plan. We would ask the committee to look at fully funding this request.
- Thank you for partially funding the new BCA State Fraud Unit providing state agencies with a resource to report suspected criminal fraud. 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.
- HSEM 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 and support for local emergency management grants provided in this bill.
- 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, which is the only state-wide task force, adequately to meet the needs and demands placed on the MNHITF while ensuring 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 not focus only on sex trafficking, but also address labor trafficking. Funding this task force also frees up additional time for agents in the BCA Predatory Crimes Section which investigates child sexual abuse material cases going from around 3000 tips of suspected material in 2019 to nearly 7500 in 2022. In addition, having the ability for the Anti-

Trafficking Coordinator to serve alongside the BCA Task Force enhances training and outreach opportunities.

- The Walz-Flanagan public safety budget includes a critical investment to help decrease forensic evidence examination turnaround times for 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. This bill provides a good start to reducing turnaround times to acceptable levels for all forms of violent crime. However, the accompanying policy language only covers sexual assault examination kits and would exclude other violent crimes like 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 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.
- The Senate Judiciary proposal helps Minnesota maintain crime victim services throughout Minnesota as federal funding decreases, as well as make critical investments to providing emergency housing and safe, sustainable transitional housing for crime victims throughout Minnesota. However, the bill does not provide additional critical investments to the growing needs of providers throughout the state, such as additional emergency direct funding through Cornerstone or needed family law services in addition to other services as testified to this session. OJP strives to provide stable ongoing crime victim services throughout Minnesota and relying on one-time funding through the new Community Crime and Violence Prevention Account will limit that ability.

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,



Bob Jacobson
Commissioner Department of Public Safety