



MN8
550 Rice Street,
Saint Paul, MN 55103

March 20, 2024

Dear Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

I am Kay Moua writing as MN8, Director of Programs & Power-Building to urge you to support HF 2201, a bill to mandate that Minnesota counties annually report pre-trial data to the Sentencing Guidelines Commission so the Commission can make recommendations to improve statewide bail and pre-trial practices.

MN8 is a non-profit that fights for the liberation of Southeast Asian communities and to keep families together by ending detention and deportation. Our organization started with the campaign #ReleaseMN8 when 8 Cambodian Minnesotans received final removal orders in 2016. Since then, we've been fighting to keep families together and to return justice and dignity to refugee and immigrant communities. We are a political home for Southeast Asians to build collective power, create systemic change, and work towards a shared future where our communities can heal and thrive for future generations.

THE PROBLEM: Each year, at least 69,000 people are booked into local jails in Minnesota. At MN8, we have seen our Southeast Asian communities charged and criminalized at high rates often leading to immigration consequences decades later, resulting in an aggressive double punishment. Refugees, especially youth, also often have an increased entanglement with law enforcement due to the challenges of adjusting to a new country, heightened by poverty, lack of resources, and bullying. We believe to truly create public safety, refugees need resources, not punishment.

Minnesotans deserve transparency and accountability from the pre-trial system. But right now, it is practically impossible for lawmakers or the public to access county-by-county data that would provide a clear and complete picture of pre-trial practices in our state.

This lack of transparency prevents lawmakers from identifying and addressing systemic harms, and it removes a critical check against public disinformation about the pre-trial and cash bail systems. This transparency also helps community organizations like ours better understand and support our communities with the resources and advocacy support they need.

THE SOLUTION: SF 3222/HF 2201 would improve transparency by requiring Minnesota counties to collect and report data for everyone who is subject to the pre-trial process, including:

- The defendant's race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender, housing status, and occupation;
- Data about a defendant's bail including whether bail was required for release, the amount of bail required, the judge who set the bail, whether the defendant was released pre-trial, the length of pre-trial incarceration, and whether (and how) a defendant paid the bail; and
- Other pending cases associated with the defendant; and
- The outcome of the defendant's case.

Each year the Commission will report to the Legislature about the impact of the cash bail system on racial and socioeconomic inequities and on costs for taxpayers and communities.

Minnesota's pretrial system impacts lives, families, and communities, and it shouldn't be allowed to operate in the dark. I urge you to support the passage of **SF 3222/HF 2201 for pre-trial data transparency in Minnesota.**

Sincerely,
Kay Moua
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