



March 18, 2024

Members of the Minnesota Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee

Re: Letter in Support of Senate File 3222

Dear Chair Latz and Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) and Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) submit this letter to express our support for Senate File 3222. Our coalitions represent over 120 programs serving victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence across the state. We advocate on behalf of our member organizations and individuals to lift the voices of victims/survivors at the legislature and beyond.

Each year, at least 69,000 people are booked into local jails in Minnesota¹. Many people are there simply because they can't afford bail, and they are disproportionately poor or unhoused and Black, brown, or Indigenous². All of this comes at tremendous costs to Minnesota taxpayers, who pay an estimated minimum \$55/day to incarcerate legally innocent people in local jails³ with no measurable benefit for public safety⁴.

Minnesotans deserve transparency and accountability from the pre-trial system. Right now, it is practically impossible for lawmakers or the public to access county-by-county data that would

¹ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2019/09/18/state-jail-bookings/>

² <https://www.vera.org/downloads/pdfdownloads/state-incarceration-trends-minnesota.pdf>

³ <https://claycountymn.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4211/Clay-County-Domestic-Violence-Court-Cost-Benefit-Analysis?bidId=>

⁴ <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2023/07/06/bail-reform/>

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.

We support this bill's efforts to improve transparency in Minnesota's pre-trial system. It is not uncommon for victims of sexual and domestic violence to be arrested for crimes related to that violence, such as prostitution-related crimes or for defending themselves against their abusers. We know that many people also experience violence while in confinement. Our current system of cash bail works in effect to expose poor and unhoused people to greater potential for violence or harm during confinement while also increasing their risk of losing employment, housing, and access to care. Minnesota's pretrial system impacts lives, families, and communities, and does not provide a significant benefit to public safety. We urge you to support the passage of SF 3222 for pre-trial data transparency in Minnesota.

In Community,

PaHoua Vang
Interim Executive Director, MNCASA

Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director, VFMN

Sarah Florman
Public Policy Manager, MNCASA

Jess Palyan
Policy Program Manager, VFMN