



OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY

John J. Choi

March 18, 2024

RE: SF 3222/HF 2201 Bail Data Collected to Improve Bail Practices

Dear Legislators,

I urge you to support HF 2201, a bill to require that Minnesota counties annually report pre-trial data to the Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

Each year, at least 69,000 people are booked into local jails in Minnesota and many of them are there because they can't afford bail. I think we can all agree that someone's liberty should not be determined by how much money they have, but we do not even know how many people in Minnesota are jailed because they cannot afford bail. Before we can understand, much less agree on, any changes to our money bail system we need to understand it and how it impacts Minnesota communities. Currently there is no centralized or uniform way of collecting the data needed to understand our system. The lack of transparency prevents you as lawmakers from identifying and addressing the impact of our money bail system, and it prevents the public from being able to form an informed opinion about what they want it to look like.

Here in Ramsey County, I am proud of the work I and our Sheriff and County Manager have led to improve jail data transparency - we now have a publicly accessible jail data dashboard. But without the uniformity and statewide scope of this legislation, it will be of limited value for the rest of the State.

This bill is a much-needed step in government transparency, and critical for understanding a system that has serious consequences for liberty and safety in every Minnesota community.

Sincerely,

John J. Choi
Ramsey County Attorney

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