

Zedé Harut
Seeds Worth Sowing
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March 20, 2024

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

I am Zedé Harut writing as **Seeds Worth Sowing**, Executive Director to urge you to support **HF 2201/SF322**, 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.

At Seeds Worth Sowing (SWS) our mission is to build community with Black and Brown families so that they have the tools to stand in their collective power and build the lives they want, need and deserve.

THE PROBLEM: Each year, at least 69,000 people are booked into local jails in Minnesota. At SWS, justice-impacted mothers, in particular black and brown, are being charged and criminalized at a much higher rate than white women. MN's pretrial system is criminalizing families including children. When women are held in jail because of bail this causes a ripple effect on the whole family, from losing employment, and housing, and children being out of school for an extended period, which creates more unintended consequences on the family with the child protection system. In black and brown communities, women are the primary caregivers of the family and when the woman is being criminalized for defending herself and held in jail because of bail this destroys the whole family structure.

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.

THE SOLUTION: 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 **HF 2201 for pre-trial data transparency in Minnesota**.

Sincerely,
Zédé Harut
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