



Twin Cities Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee
PO Box 581561, Minneapolis MN, 55458



Dear Chair and Members of the Public Safety Committee,

I'm writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Incarcerated Workers Organizing Committee -- and all our members across Minnesota and inside Minnesota's prisons -- in support of **HF 2201 / SF 3222**, which mandates 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.

According to the Vera Institute over 201,000 people are sent to jail each year in Minnesota, for an average population of nearly 5,5000 on any given day, up 425% since 1980. Of these, a currently unknown tens of thousands are there because they can't afford bail -- *though Vera estimates people held pre-trial is a dramatic 67% of the total* (Vera Institute Incarceration Trends: Minnesota Updated: August 21, 2023).

We know from personal experience that if you can't afford bail you are coerced into settling for charges you may or may not have done, while if you refuse, you are threatened with and often receive over the top charges for going to trial. Justice is not punishing those who seek to exercise their rights or holding innocent people without real access to law libraries, lawyers, work, or the public we need to support ourselves.

And destroying families while someone is innocent and unable to pay sets our communities up for more of the same: growing poverty, violence, and incarceration. We know this from our direct experiences -- but the collected facts of this are currently hidden from lawmakers through lack of clear and complete county by county pre-trial data.

Yet we know counties pay an average of over \$200 a day to hold our neighbors in jail -- which is typically far more than is needed to get their lives together -- and significantly more expensive than prison with far fewer basic services (MN DOC 2023 Performance Report). If Vera's estimates are accurate, simple cash bail reform could shift \$100 million a year or more at the county level to ensure community safety. *But this is why we need this bill, to know.*

It is also in jail conditions that at least a hundred people a year are dying in Minnesota every decade (MPR:In Minnesota, jail deaths spiked last year despite new protections, Kirsti Marohn 2-12-2024). Current data suggests these are overwhelmingly pre-trial deaths. How can we say these spaces are safe if people are dying? How can we say it's creating safety if we're punishing the poorest people with more costs they can't pay, keeping innocent working people from their families and communities? And why are we paying more than prison to enforce this terror and suffering -- that in most cases causes more, not less, of both? *And why can't we even have the data to know?*

You as lawmakers, county officials, and we as the Public, inside and out of our prisons and jails, deserve to know the facts. We hope this is not too much to ask for the interest of public safety.

Sincerely,

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