



Legal Services Advocacy Project

March 23, 2024

The Honorable Ron Latz
Chair, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Minnesota Senate
3105 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Warren Limmer
Ranking Minority Leader, Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Minnesota Senate
2221 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: SF 3987 – Restorative Justice for Juveniles

Dear Chair Latz, Ranking Minority Leader Limmer, and Member of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

Legal Aid writes in strong support of HF 3987, the juvenile restorative justice program bill. Legal Aid provides civil legal services to low-income Minnesotans, Minnesotans with disabilities, and elder Minnesotans, statewide, to help them meet their basic needs.

SF 3987 has many laudable goals: to enhance public safety; to expand opportunities an offending youth to account for the damage caused through actions; to enhance a youth's positive self-image and sense of connection with their community; and to reduce recidivism.

Further, the bill seeks to address the burden of fines and fees on children and families caught up in the juvenile justice system. These fines and fees merely serves to drive families deeper in debt and exacerbate the conditions that may have led to the youth winding up in the juvenile justice system in the first place.

A recent study sponsored by the United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs found that restorative justice leads to "a greater sense of justice for the victims, and forgiveness on the part of the victim and/or community. Long-term benefits expected of this process include reducing future offending and juvenile justice system costs."¹

Enactment of SF 3987 will help youthful offenders, help victims and communities heal, and improve public safety. Legal Aid urges its passage.

Sincerely,

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney

¹ David B. Wilson, Ph.D., Ajima Olaghere, Ph.D., Catherine S. Kimbrell, M.A., *Effectiveness of Restorative Justice Principles in Juvenile Justice: A Meta Analysis* (May 2017).