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March 14th, 2025

Honorable Senators Ron Latz and Warren Limmer  
Minnesota State Senate – Chair and Lead of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee  
95 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Dear Senators Latz and Limmer,

I write in opposition to SF 1719, in current form, which would create a Task Force (TF) on mandatory minimum sentences. I respectfully submit the following concerns and recommendations:

- Subdivision 2 introduces the mission of the TF, as assessing whether current mandatory minimum sentencing promotes *public safety* and *equity* in sentencing. These terms have become too subjective in today's world and require defining in a manner satisfactory to your entire committee. I would argue that sentencing policy must be based on equality, not equity.
- Subdivision 3 lists the proposed membership of the TF. Of the 12 positions described it is arguable that at least 8 of them would not be supportive of mandatory minimum sentencing policy. This sets up an obvious pre-determined outcome. More effort is needed to ensure a more evenly mixed TF of criminal justice system professionals. Consider adding a district court and appellate judge to the TF and removing positions made up of advocates. Advocates should be heard from in the context of Duties of the TF as listed in Sub 5. Finally, to limit political bias, the process for appointing members should involve recommendations to and approval by an even number of Chairs and Leads from the Senate and House Public Safety Committees, not, for example, appointments by the Governor.
- Subdivision 5 lays out the minimum duties of the TF. (2) Mandates analysis of mitigated durational departures but should also include mitigated dispositional departures. (6-7) Mandates that the TF receive input from persons and family members of persons subjected to a mandatory minimum sentence. The TF should also hear from victims who support mandatory minimum sentences. (8 i and ii) These items are subjective and require definition.
- Subdivision 6. Given the potential impact of this TF's recommendations on sentencing, six meetings over a six-month time frame is not sufficient to properly research the issue and submit a worthwhile report. This timeframe adds to the suspicion that the TF would simply be facilitating a pre-determined outcome of eliminating mandatory minimum sentencing in Minnesota.

Sincerely

*David P. Zimmer*

David Zimmer  
Public Safety Policy Fellow  
Center of the American Experiment