



Dear Chair Latz and Members

Violence Free Minnesota, the coalition to end relationship abuse, writes in support of SF 1055, a bill to ensure domestic violence advocates have the same level of confidentiality as sexual violence advocates.

This bill is necessary to ensure that our community-based domestic violence advocates are able to create relationships with their clients based on trust. Domestic violence advocates are a crucial connection point between survivors and a wide array of social services. Ensuring that a survivor can tell their advocate any potentially relevant information relating to their safety and health needs without the possibility that the information will be disclosed outside of the advocate-client relationship is crucial to ensuring survivors are connected with quality care.

Under current law, advocates need to carefully parse with their clients what confidentiality means and what information is protected. This can be a confusing and frustrating process - during an already incredibly stressful time - which chills the ability of the survivor to speak freely, especially considering that many advocates are both sexual violence advocates *and* domestic violence advocates.

Some information which can be useful to an advocate could potentially be dangerous if disclosed to the abuser or someone connected to the abuser, such as: the survivor's new address, the survivor's new place of employment, the address of any of the survivor's children or family members, and the time and place of any appointments the survivor needs to keep. Unambiguously protecting this information aids in the establishment of trust with clients.

This bill simplifies confidentiality so that everyone, whether a survivor of sexual violence, domestic violence, or both, can have a community-based advocate who is able to be by their side, with the full confidence that anything they say will never be disclosed without the client's approval. Please support SF 1055.

Thank you,
Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director
Violence Free Minnesota