

Good afternoon Chair Latz and Members of the Public Safety Committee. Thank you for your time today.

My name is Sara Rose and I am here in support of SF 1907. I am also a friend of an incarcerated person, Mr. Lennell Martin, and his family. I am here with Mr. Martin's mother today and other supporters today.

Mr. Martin has been incarcerated for 22 years. He was granted his first commutation hearing this past May of 2024. At the hearing, Mr. Martin expressed deep remorse to the victim's family. However, the family members were very upset, stating that Mr. Martin had never shown remorse before and was only apologizing now because of his commutation hearing. They were unaware of the work he had done to take accountability for his actions prior to that moment.

Offenders are not allowed to reach out to victims or victim's families directly to apologize. They write apology letters as part of their Restorative Justice process or of their own accord. Letters are supposedly stored in a letter bank. Mr. Martin wrote the first of three apology letters in 2009. His attorney asked for a copy of these letters for the 2024 commutation packet but was unable to retrieve them.

The MN DOC has a victim notification policy that lists 22 events worthy of notifying a victim or victim's family. Transfer to another facility, change of supervising agent and death are three of the 22. The existence of an apology letter is not on the list. Knowing about an apology letter could potentially be a step towards healing for the victim's family.

At Mr. Martin's commutation hearing, Governor Walz talked about healing. I hear him reference healing a lot, it is obviously something he desires for all the citizens of MN and it resonates with the principles of restorative justice. Mr. Martin is actively involved in restorative justice at Stillwater: He sits on the council, co-facilitates the apology letter writing class, and formally and informally counsels men.

Healing for everyone is at the foundation of true Restorative Justice. How much less disdain would that family have felt if they knew the depth of Mr. Martin's sorrow? Would they be on their way to healing too? SF 1907 presents an opportunity to strengthen the restorative justice process and ensure that apology letters are appropriately considered. This bill could indeed open the door to deeper healing for all parties involved and contribute to a safer Minnesota.

Again, thank you for your time and consideration.