



MISSIONS INC.
PROGRAMS

**Domestic Violence Services
Behavioral Health and Housing
Skilled Nursing Care**

March 28, 2025

Chair Latz and committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Lauren Franzen, I'm a survivor of domestic violence and I am also a domestic violence shelter advocate at Missions Inc. Programs located in Plymouth. I am here today to ask you to support SF 3002, which would allow courts to consider a defendant's experience of abuse when determining their sentence.

When I was pregnant with my youngest daughter, I was arrested on drug charges along with my daughter's father. I take full responsibility for my actions that led to that arrest; I'm not here to make excuses but to share how the physical and emotional abuse I experienced impacted my decisions. Throughout our relationship, my then partner isolated, degraded, and controlled me. He was extremely violent towards me when I didn't do what he wanted – choking me, punching me in the face, and even setting my hand on fire because I talked to another man. To this day, I experience dental issues due to the severity of his abuse. I tell you this so you understand why I was terrified of disobeying him. When he told me to engage in illegal behavior, I knew exactly what would happen if I said no.

We were arrested together on multiple drug charges. I was lucky – I was sentenced to Drug Court and was able to go through substance use treatment. I gave birth to my daughter, Hazel, while in treatment and I have been sober ever since. At no point during my court case did I have an opportunity to talk about the abuse I experienced – it wasn't considered relevant to my case. But fear for my safety and even my life impacted every decision I made.

After I was arrested, my probation officer also helped me reach out to Missions Inc. Programs and I lived at the domestic violence shelter for five months before finding housing. A few years later, I became an advocate at the same shelter that helped me when I was afraid and alone. When I speak to current residents, I let them know that I've been where they are so they see what healing can look like.

Please support SF 3002 so that people in the same situation I was can have the full context of their experience considered by the court. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Lauren Franzen
Domestic Violence Advocate
Missions Inc. Programs

We, the undersigned University of St. Thomas School of Law Students Support Victim/Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Passage of the Survivors Justice Act (SJA) in Minnesota.

We write today to promote the passage of a bill which will help to prevent the criminalization of survivors. We believe that this bill will improve the victim/survivor experience in the criminal justice system by allowing sentencing officials to consider the effect of the abuse that the victim/survivor suffered in relation to their alleged criminal activity.

A criminalized survivor is a victim whose experiences of being abused are related in some way to their involvement in the criminal justice system. Survivors of domestic violence, also known as intimate partner violence, are often arrested and incarcerated for doing what they needed to do to survive and protect their children and loved ones. Criminalized survivors are often re-victimized by the very systems that were intended to protect them.

The correlation between victimization and criminalization is stark, especially among women and communities of color. Up to 94% of incarcerated women have experienced domestic and sexual violence prior to entering prison, and all but one of the sixty-two Native American women incarcerated in Minnesota's women's prison have been a victim of domestic abuse or sexual violence, according to the 2019 report from Violence Free Minnesota. The need for a bill to aid in the change in these statistics is more prevalent than ever.

This is where your support of upcoming legislation, the Survivors Justice Act (SJA), can make a real difference in the lives of Minnesotans that are victims/survivors. The bill, as now written, would: (1) require presentence investigation reports to include certain information; (2) provide for mitigated departures for certain offenders who have been victims; (3) direct the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission to include an additional mitigating factor; and (4) allow certain offenders who have been victims to apply for a pardon or for clemency.

Thank you for your support.

Three handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Kristina Brindley', the second is 'Elayna Chambers', and the third is 'Daphne Karofsky'.

Kristina Brindley, Elayna Chambers, & Daphne Karofsky