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Re: Support for the Pretrial Data Bill (SF 1908)

Dear Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota is an organization devoted to preserving the rights and liberties enshrined in our constitution and laws. The Pretrial Data Bill will provide lawmakers, judicial system actors, and everyday Minnesotans with the information necessary to evaluate the efficacy and fairness of how the government treats people accused of a crime.

The Minnesota and United States Constitutions provide robust protections for all Minnesotans. Several of those rights are at the heart of the pretrial detention system: the right to be free of excessive bail protects those awaiting trial from paying exorbitant amounts for their freedom while they await trial; the right to due process of law prohibits the government from depriving Minnesotans of their liberty without reasonable process, and the right to equal protection of the law means that the government may not treat Minnesotans differently based on arbitrary classifications.

Currently, the pretrial detention system lacks the transparency necessary to ensure that those rights are protected. What is clear is that oftentimes people are held in custody before their trials based not on evidence that they are likely to commit a new crime or not show up to court but based on their income level. This is especially true for communities of color.

All Minnesotans deserve transparent and effective government systems that do what they are supposed to do. The Pretrial Data Bill is an important step in holding government agencies accountable and demonstrating what pretrial practices will actually keep communities safe while protecting constitutional rights.

The ACLU-MN urges the committee to pass SF 1908.

Regards,

Alicia Granse, ACLU-MN Staff Attorney