

Dear Public Safety Legislators,

My name is Becca Chalit Hernandez, and I live in Minneapolis, and I see firsthand how delays in implementing the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act (MRRA) affect our communities.

I am writing to urge you to act now to ensure that the Stillwater transition is safe, effective, and financially sustainable for tax-payers by fully enacting the MRRA.

It has been 26 months since the MRRA became law, yet there is still no finalized policy or implementation plan. MRRA presents a valuable opportunity for the Stillwater closure to facilitate more reparative outcomes. Furthermore, the possibilities for our community members in Stillwater to work toward giving back to the community and reuniting with their loved ones by participating in meaningful education, work, and therapeutic programs has been profoundly motivating for many within this and other facilities. The Department of Corrections has demonstrated its ability to move quickly when it comes to the closure of Stillwater — we are simply asking you to make smart and responsible use of this opportunity to bring our community members home using the laws that are already on the books.

Instead, currently we are seeing that the draft policies immediately exclude many of the people who should qualify. Meanwhile, men from Stillwater are being crammed into every available bed at other facilities—creating unnecessary conflict, chaos, and violence. This is a major missed opportunity and it serves no one.

According to 2021 data, nearly 3,000 people are eligible for MRRA review today, and at least 1,000 of them should be coming home once the law is implemented. Likewise, thousands of the 18,000 people currently on supervision have earned abatement status and should no longer need a parole officer. This would allow parole officers to focus on the people who truly need the support and guidance supervision offers, making their caseloads more manageable and effective.

We don't want more problems in our prisons. So much of this can be solved if the DOC simply follows the law. I urge you to ensure that the DOC enforces the MRRA now. Our communities can't wait any longer.

Thank you,
Becca Chalit Hernandez
Minneapolis, MN