



An Equal Opportunity Employer

February 15, 2022

The Honorable Michael Nelson
Chair State Government Finance and Elections Committee
585 State Office Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Representative Nelson,

I write this letter to you as the Freeborn County Attorney to address the first item on your agenda Thursday, February 17, 2022, the Presentation of the Governor's supplemental budget request from the Office of the Attorney General. On behalf of a county that has benefitted from Minnesota's excellent Attorney General's Office, I write to support an increase in funding that will enable the AG to enhance service to rural counties.

The Freeborn County Attorney Office is a small office of only 5 attorneys when fully staffed. We have been short-staffed since September 2021 with a continually running newspaper ad and still no qualified candidate to fill the vacancy. Our 4 current attorneys have a cumulative professional experience of over 80 years in the office, and we handle everything from mental health commitments, guardianships, and child protection to the gamut of adult prosecutions from speeding tickets to murder. We relish the variety of our legal practice and welcome the challenge, but when we encounter a once-in-a-decade murder case, a sexual psychopathic personality in need of civil commitment, or a complex appeal, we can readily become overwhelmed by the specialized legal expertise required for competent and effective action.

We don't reach out to the AG's office every week or every month, but when we do reach out, it's because we desperately need assistance to function. The AG is currently assisting our office in two complex cases that would be straining us beyond the breaking point without their help: an attempted murder case involving three victims including a local policeman who were shot by the defendant seemingly randomly from his apartment window, and a sexual psychopathic personality commitment that requires expertise that we just can't maintain given the frequency with which we face these kinds of challenges.

We need the AG and I strongly support the funding to ensure that we have their assistance when the challenges of our varied legal practice drive us to the brink.

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