VIOLENCE FREE
MINNESOTA
THE COALITION TO END RELATIONSHIP ABUSE

March 16, 2021

Chair Liebling
Members of the House Health Finance and Policy

Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Support for Paid Family Medical Leave; Safety Leave for Survivors, HF1200

Dear Chair Liebling and Members of the Health Finance and Policy Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) submits this letter to express our support for HF1200 and to highlight the need for safety leave protections for survivors of domestic abuse. VFMN is a statewide coalition with over 90 member programs who provide advocacy and services to domestic and sexual violence victim survivors in all of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Whether a survivor is in an abusive relationship, in the midst of fleeing, or working to move forward from a past abusive relationship, they are faced with dangers and challenges on many levels. Surviving abuse and navigating its aftermath is traumatic, expensive, and time-consuming. Survivors need time to address their medical and safety needs, such as accessing healthcare, attending counseling, obtaining legal services, meeting with an advocate, or relocating their housing. Yet, when survivors take these steps to protect and care for themselves and their children, they often run the risk of losing their employment or much needed wages as a result of missing work. For a survivor in an already tenuous situation, the additional factor of lost income can be devastating; potentially forcing a them to face housing loss or return to an abusive situation.

HF1200 establishes vital supports for survivors of domestic abuse and their children, and puts in place much needed safeguards, by creating paid time off for safety leave. Paid safety leave provides survivors with the employment security and financial protection they need to address the health and safety needs of themselves and their children. We urge you to pass this much needed legislation as a step towards ensuring stability for survivors.

Sincerely,

Liz Richards   Katie Kramer
Executive Director   Policy Director
Violence Free Minnesota   Violence Free Minnesota