



Central Office

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April 29, 2024

Chair Fue Lee
House Capital Investment Committee
485 State Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Lee and Members of the Capital Investment Committee:

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for your leadership to improve the infrastructure of Minnesota's state correctional facilities. The inclusion of Department of Corrections (DOC) projects and asset preservation funding in House File 5220 reflects how critical the investments are to improving outcomes for those incarcerated and, subsequently, enhancing the public safety of Minnesota.

The inclusion of \$60 million in general obligation (GO) bonds for asset preservation will immediately be put to use toward the department's significant deferred maintenance backlog, in addition to the \$3.9 million appropriation in the bill for non-bondable, essential components of those projects. As the third largest agency, the DOC has an enormous footprint and carries 33% of the deferred maintenance need across all state agencies. These buildings are where over 8,000 incarcerated individuals live 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is the DOC's responsibility to ensure safety in the facilities and – critically – to create better outcomes upon their reentry to our communities. DOC facilities are also the workplace of nearly 4,000 dedicated state employees who have some of the most challenging jobs in state government, often exacerbated by the conditions of the deteriorating buildings in which they work.

Additionally, your leadership in prioritizing the expansion of rehabilitative programming space at the prison in Rush City, such as behavioral health treatment space and classrooms, will directly impact public safety outcomes far into the future. As you know, the prison was built to accommodate half of the population that it holds today. By investing the needed \$46.6 million in GO bonds for the project, you are correcting this past oversight by ensuring sufficient space to effectively rehabilitate and change outcomes. This means a safer prison with less warehousing of individuals and more evidence-based programming to reduce recidivism such as sex offense treatment, secondary education, and post-secondary education. Research shows that programs such as these ultimately lead to fewer crimes committed and fewer victims. Data also provides a direct link from incarcerated individuals who attain post-secondary degrees to the likelihood that their children go on to obtain post-secondary education themselves, in time reducing the intergenerational impact of incarceration.

Finally, your investment in the rehabilitation of vacant, unusable space at the Lino Lakes facility is greatly appreciated. The project will increase opportunities for treatment and programming at that facility as well.

Again, thank you for investing in Minnesota's corrections system. When over 95% of individuals incarcerated in Minnesota prisons return to our communities, our collective safety depends upon their success. Your support of the infrastructure needs of the DOC helps to ensure this work is successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Schnell', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Schnell
Commissioner, Department of Corrections