

HENNEPIN COUNTY

ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Mary F. Moriarty
Hennepin County Attorney
C-2000 Government Center
300 South 6th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55487

2/16/23

Representative Kelly Moller
509 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Kelly Moller and Public Safety Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to express my support for HF 1319, the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act (MRRA), which will make prisons more effective in helping people to transform their lives and will make Minnesota communities safer.

As Hennepin County Attorney, my office sends people to prison every day. We send people to prison because we hope the time they spend there will cause them to live differently when they are released. And most will be released – more than 95% of people in prison are not serving life sentences. To give us the best chance of people leaving prison transformed, we must focus far less on how much time people spend in prison and instead refocus our attention on how their time in prison is spent. That is why I support MRRA.

In Minnesota, determinate sentencing means the time someone will spend in prison is, for the most part, known the day they enter prison. How much time a person spends in prison does not change whether they participate in programming or not. That leads far too many to leave prison without getting the services they need to transform their lives. Too many simply count their days and wait for that release date.

MRRA changes the paradigm by incentivizing those who are incarcerated to look inwardly, recognize issues that led them to prison, and make progress on addressing those issues. MRRA creates the incentive of earned early release through meaningful participation in substance abuse treatment, mental health counseling, vocational skills training, and education amongst other programs. MRRA improves community safety by incentivizing people to address the very issues that led to their incarceration in the first place.

Passing this bill will put Minnesota in the company of 38 other states that have earned early release policies. These policies have shown to improve correctional outcomes while also saving states millions of dollars. As we rely on prisons as part of our strategy to address violence, we owe it to Minnesotans to make prisons as effective as possible in their stated mission: transforming lives. MRRA is a good step.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Moriarty
Hennepin County Attorney