

March 21, 2023

Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of House File 2956

Dear Members of the Committee:

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) submits this letter to express our support for House File 2956. MNCASA is a statewide membership coalition driving transformative culture change to address sexual violence through advocacy, prevention, racial justice, and systems change. MNCASA acts as a collective voice of organizations and individuals committed to ending sexual violence.

MNCASA supports the expansion of the Sentencing Guidelines Commission to include victim/survivor advocates. Advocates who work directly with victims/survivors have a broad perspective on the different ways that victims/survivors can be affected by crime, and what they need for restoration. This change does not in any way diminish the voice of victims; in fact it can improve the ability of the Commission to be a trauma-informed, victim-centered space where victim/survivor members can feel comfortable expressing their views.

This bill also adds a treatment provider to the commission. Our work has shown that in many cases, victims/survivors are not seeking long prison sentences. They want the violence to stop and the person committing the violence to get help. As we learn more about the root causes of crime, we now understand that many individuals who commit violence have been victims themselves. Adding a treatment provider adds a much-needed perspective on the role that treatment plays in rehabilitating offenders and ending the cycle of violence.

Too often, sentences do not reflect the wishes and interests of the people or communities harmed. It's often assumed that people who experience harm always want a punitive response and the most severe punishment possible. For some this is true. Yet many victims/survivors express a desire for healing and restoration for themselves and their communities as well as accountability and sometimes even restoration for the person who

harmed them. Most of all, victims/survivors want a voice in the process. By passing this legislation, we can provide them this chance.

We urge you to support House File 2956 and provide these important changes to the Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

In Community,

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Executive Director, MNCASA

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