



Dear Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and members of the committee:

Violence Free Minnesota, the coalition to end relationship abuse, writes today in strong support of HF 2976, the Survivor's Justice Act. Our membership-based coalition has over 90 member programs who provide direct domestic and sexual violence services in every county in our state. This bill would help bring badly needed nuance and context to criminal cases featuring criminalized survivors.

Criminalized survivors are survivors who have committed a crime and been arrested in connection with their abuse. In some cases this is accidental - a case of misarrest or dual arrest after an unclear situation. Other times, survivors of physical abuse are arrested for hitting back, for using substances to cope in connection to their abuse, or for committing crimes out of desperation after their abuser cleaned out their bank account, or for being present during crimes principally committed by their abuser. These are just some of a number of examples commonly seen by our advocates. In a 2022 survey of our membership, **89%** of Minnesota advocates indicated that they had worked with at least one survivor who had been arrested in connection to their experience of abuse.

Survivors consistently report that their trauma and experience of violence is *not* considered by attorneys or courts. The context of their crimes is not considered. This bill starts the process of changing that in Minnesota. It ensures that relevant information on domestic violence, sexual violence, or trafficking is included in the pre-sentence investigation, and authorizes the court to pronounce a mitigated sentence if it is in the public interest. This bill does *not* prevent a person from being pronounced guilty, but it *does* allow for courts to take more information into account when appropriate.

This bill also authorizes incarcerated survivors to cite their experience of violence when applying for a pardon, clemency, or prosecutor-initiated sentencing adjustment. It is crucial that we recognize the traumas of those already incarcerated and work to ensure that the underlying traumas that these survivors experienced can be recognized and responded to appropriately.

Elsewhere in this packet are letters from experts, programs, and most importantly, survivors who have direct experience with this issue. We urge you to read their stories. It is an incredibly vulnerable position for a survivor of violence to be in— both harmed by their abuser or trafficker *and* punished by the criminal-legal system, and still going on the legislative record to ensure that other people like them never have to suffer the same type of criminalization that they did. They demonstrate the need for Minnesota to recognize and adjust for the circumstances of criminalized survivors, and we are happy to join them. Please pass HF 2976.

Thank you,
Katie Kramer and Nikki Engel
Co-Executive Directors
Violence Free Minnesota



March 5, 2026

Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of the Survivor Justice Act, H.F. 2976

Dear Chair Moller, Chair Novotny, and Members of the Committee,

The Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA) submits this letter to express our support for the Survivor Justice Act – HF2976/SF3002. 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. Our coalition represents more than 60 member programs serving victims/survivors of sexual violence across the state.

As a statewide leader in the effort to address gender-based violence, MNCASA knows firsthand that victims/survivors don't exist exclusively on one side of the criminal legal system. Unfortunately, violence and trauma can contribute to circumstances in which victims are themselves charged with crimes. Survivors often turn to drugs or alcohol to cope in the aftermath of sexual assault, which can lead to criminal charges. Many victims of trafficking are charged after being forced to engage in sex work. An advocate recently shared a story of a victim who was charged with theft when she fled the scene of her rape in the offender's vehicle. These examples are not unique. Research shows that as many as 94% of incarcerated women have experienced domestic and sexual violence prior to incarceration. In these cases, incarceration frequently compounds their trauma and cuts them off from pathways to safety and healing, not only for themselves, but also for their families and communities.

The Survivor Justice Act would give judges and prosecutors the tools and direction needed to fully consider the context of abuse and coercion when making sentencing decisions. We submit this testimony in support of victims/survivors who became involved in the criminal legal system because they fought back against their abuser or were charged with offenses directly related to the violence they experienced, and we ask that you vote in favor of passage.

Sincerely,

Victoria Pickering

Training and Technical Assistance Director, MNCASA



March 6, 2026

Members of the Minnesota House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee

Re: Letter of Support for the Survivor's Justice Act (H.F. 2976/S.F.3002)

Dear Chair Moller and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of The Advocates for Human Rights, to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (H.F. 2976/S.F.3002). We fervently believe that the Survivor's Justice Act is an essential step towards protecting survivors of gender-based violence and improving public safety across Minnesota.

At The Advocates for Human Rights, we work with human rights defenders across the globe to advocate for the rights of survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and sex trafficking. As part of that work, we coordinate WATCH, a court monitoring program that observes criminal court proceedings and analyzes the legal system's response to gender-based violence. Through WATCH, we see firsthand the multitude of ways that abuse can lead to arrest and incarceration and the serious need for mechanisms, like the Survivor's Justice Act, to more effectively address this interplay.

In 2024/2025, WATCH conducted an intensive observation project in Hennepin County Criminal court related to the experience of survivor-defendants. Volunteers observed hearings for 327 women and gender diverse defendants and conducted court record searches for each of them. We also conducted listening sessions and interviews with survivors who had experienced arrest and prosecution for issues stemming from abuse they experienced, community partners, defense counsel, prosecutors, and victim witness specialists. The results highlighted the high rates of arrest and prosecution for survivors. ***In approximately 53% of the cases that we observed, court records directly referenced the defendant having experienced intimate partner violence or trafficking or included high-risk indicators that the defendant had experienced these types of abuse.*** This is staggering, particularly when taking into account the limited nature of information available within public records.

We also repeatedly observed and received feedback on (i) how coercive control, fear, economic instability, and trauma from abuse directly lead to survivor criminalization, (ii) the lack of understanding or recognition of this connection in court, and (iii) the devastating impacts that this disconnect has on safety, mental health, employment, housing, and the ability to escape abusive situations for survivors and their children.

We urge you to support The Survivor's Justice Act. Sentencing without accounting for the full context of a case, including a history of abuse, leads to ineffective problem solving and undermines public safety. The Survivor's Justice Act would give system actors the ability to determine accountability in a more holistic manner, fostering substantive change, safety, and healing.

Sincerely,

Anne Applebaum
Director of WATCH Advocacy & Programming
The Advocates for Human Rights

3/9/2026

Dear Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and members of the committee,



I am writing on behalf of Esperanza United, a domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy organization serving the state of Minnesota, to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

Through our work, we see firsthand how trauma, coercion, and abuse can shape a person's actions. Many survivors become involved in the criminal legal system because of conduct directly related to their victimization. They are often under duress, responding to threats, or attempting to survive violence. Traditional sentencing guidelines do not always take these experiences or their lasting impacts into account, compounding the harm of the original abuse and transforming the system into an agent of further harm. This Act offers a more just path to healing, accountability, and community reintegration by giving judges greater flexibility to consider a person's history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. This does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows for courts to evaluate the full picture and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice.

The Act allows the Clemency Review Commission to weigh an applicant's history of abuse and its connection to their conviction, and permits individuals to petition for a waiver of the pardon eligibility waiting period under unusual circumstances. These provisions are critical for Latin@ and immigrant survivors, for whom the pipeline from victimization to criminalization is exacerbated by intersecting systemic barriers, economic instability, and the threat of immigration enforcement.

Nationally, Hispanic individuals make up 21% of people in state prisons despite representing only 17% of the U.S. population.¹ In Minnesota, over 60% of incarcerated women report experiencing abuse prior to incarceration.² For these communities, reduced sentencing alone provides scarce protections — a conviction itself can trigger immediate deportation regardless of pending immigration relief. The experience of Assia Serrano illustrates this reality.³ After becoming the first immigrant survivor granted release under a similar law in New York, she was detained by ICE upon leaving prison and deported to Panama, despite having a pending appeal for relief from deportation. Her deportation separated her from her children and underscored the gaps that remain when survivor-centered laws do not include meaningful clemency pathways.

Survivors in the Twin Cities regularly tell us that harm-doers weaponize the threat of deportation to maintain control — warning them that any prior conviction, even one obtained under coercion, could be used against them in immigration proceedings. The clemency and pardon provisions in this bill offer a meaningful path forward — allowing immigrant survivors to seek accountability while mitigating risks to their safety, freedom, or family separation.

On behalf of the communities and survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivors Justice Act.

Sincerely,
Alexander Delgado
Director of Policy
Esperanza United

1. Wang, Leah, et al. Beyond the Count: A Deep Dive into State Prison Populations. Prison Policy Initiative, Apr. 2022, prisonpolicy.org/reports/beyondthecount.html

2. Van Voorhis, Patricia, et al. Minnesota WRNA Final Report. University of Cincinnati, National Institute of Corrections, 2007, https://socialwork.utah.edu/_resources/documents/research/wrna/minnesota-wrna-final-report.pdf

3. immigrantjustice.org/chance-to-come-home/assia-serrano-leader-mother-survivor/

Dear Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and members of the committee,

I am writing today in support of the Survivors Justice Act, SF 3002/HF 2976. My name is Adanari Taggart and I am a survivor of domestic and sexual violence. I am also someone who has been criminalized in connection to my experience of violence.

For years I was in an abusive relationship experiencing physical, emotional, verbal, and sexual violence. I tried to leave several times, and yet I kept getting sucked in by the lies and promises "ill change, things will be different". The only thing that was different was how the abuse got worse. The night I was arrested I was afraid I was going to die but I had enough courage to fight back and hit my attacker, my abuser, in self-defense. He had knocked out three teeth in mouth and caused semi-paralysis on the left side of my face that I still experience today. When the police came I told them that I just wanted him to leave, they later came back and arrested me. I sat in jail four days without my medication and without eating. When I was released a DANCO was put in place that said I could not live in my own home. When I went to my home to get my belongings I was arrested again because I arrived before the police escort. When I went to court the judge did not want to hear about the violence that I experienced instead I was convicted of violating the DANCO and was court ordered to do domestic abuse classes and was put on probation for two years. Yet my abuser was never charged with assaulting me. It took me three months to get back into my home with the help of 360 Communities because I struggled to get the police to serve my OFP. After my OFP expired my abuser came back to Minnesota, broke into my home damaging it, stole from me and sold valuables including my mother's engagement and wedding band. And after all this he has continued to stalk me. But I am not the only one affected by this, my children have been impacted the most. It has been three long years since I was arrested and while I am still traumatized from my dealings with the police and the criminal justice system, today I am stronger, today I value myself, and today I want my voice heard.

This bill would help our justice system meaningfully recognize and respond to survivors like me, whose actions are tied to their abuse. This would ensure that our experiences of violence are considered by the court. This is critical. In my case, the violence that I experienced that night and in that relationship did not want to be heard by anyone. I am a domestic abuse survivor and I was labeled a criminal, an abuser for defending myself. My experience has left me afraid to call the police for help and without trust that I can find safety or justice from a system that has caused me so much pain and fear.

Other states have already passed legislation like this, ensuring criminalized survivors are treated with the nuance and context required to create just outcomes. I hope you will make Minnesota the next state to recognize the unique harm faced by criminalized survivors.

Thank you,
Adanari Taggart
South Saint Paul, Minnesota

March 6, 2026

Dear House Committee,

My name is Jake De Vera. I am a criminal justice-impacted survivor of domestic violence, the Associate Director of Women's Advocates, and I am writing to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976). My story is an intense one, so I encourage anyone easily triggered by descriptions of violence to take care of themselves.

Ten years ago, in 2016, during the last years of my PhD program at the University of Texas, and at the height of my addiction to methamphetamine, I met a man who came over to my house, sold me some dope, and never left. He took my car, kept my keys, and emptied my bank account, all while telling me he loved me and calling me his boyfriend. He was hitting me in the face while I was driving on I-35 one day when we were pulled over by the police and he was arrested, not for domestic violence, but for an outstanding warrant for check fraud, stemming from the last person he had victimized. I found out from the police officer that my boyfriend was living under a false identity. I didn't even know his name.

I didn't take his calls from jail. He left voicemails warning me that I would be sorry if I didn't add money to his commissary. I didn't have any money. He had taken it all. He had a friend call, a dangerous man, who had told me stories of going to prison for burning a person alive. Out of fear or addiction or both, I listened to his friend when he told me to come over because we needed to talk.

At his apartment, he greeted me with a pistol, hit me over the head, and when I recovered, he had handcuffed my arms behind my back. He told me he had been hired to kill me, put a gun to my back and marched me downstairs to the parking lot. As he tried to force me into the back of my car, I managed to break away and make enough noise to wake the neighbors. I screamed until the police arrived. The kidnapper fled and was never arrested.

The police treated me kindly for a moment. For a moment, they treated me like a victim of assault, kidnapping, and attempted murder. Then they found a bag of meth in my car, and everything changed. The ambulance was diverted to the county jail where I spent the next four nights, before facing charges. Because of the amount of drugs in the bag, and because this was Texas, I was facing 10 – 99 years in prison. I was strapped in an ankle bracelet and trapped in my apartment-- the only place my abuser knew to look for me. One day when I left for rehab, he was waiting outside. He

beat me with a firearm and stole all my belongings. The police arrived and dismissed it as a drug related robbery, even though no drugs were found. They did not pursue charges.

Regardless, the case against me became the easiest to prosecute. The kidnapping and attempted murder cases were complicated and quickly dissolved. I never heard of them again. The most important thing to the state, now, was that I had some meth in my car.

Fighting this case took over two years, tens of thousands of dollars, two different lawyers, and countless rejected job and housing applications based on background checks. For two years, my lawyers warned me that I would be lucky to get a 10-year prison sentence. But that didn't happen, partly because I moved to Minnesota during that time, got through rehab, and began to understand my story as a common story shared by countless victim-survivors of domestic violence across the country and started working to help survivors find safety after abuse.

It was probably the accumulation of these facts, compounded by the generosity of a Texas judge, that allowed me, after two years of supervision, to plead out for a misdemeanor. I was lucky—a judge was able to look at the preponderance of the evidence, weigh mitigating factors like my success in treatment and the violence that I had experienced, and find a punishment that fit the crime.

Today, I work in domestic violence prevention and response full-time as the Associate Director of the Women's Advocates in Saint Paul, the first domestic violence shelter in the nation for victim-survivors of domestic violence. Because of the leniency and special consideration I was given ten years ago, I have been able to serve countless survivors who are facing the same battles.

The Survivor Justice Act recognizes that many survivors become involved in the legal system because of conduct directly related to their experience of abuse and allows courts to consider survivors' experience of abuse and impose fairer sentences that reflect that reality.

If the judge in my case had not done that, and if my lawyer's predictions were correct, I would just now be getting out of a ten-year-prison sentence. Instead, I'm leading a \$5 million nonprofit that transforms survivors' lives. Please vote yes for the Survivor's Justice Act so more victim-survivors of domestic violence can have a second chance to find safety and stability.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jake De Vera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jake De Vera
Associate Director

3/9/2026

Dear Co-Chairs Moller, Novotny, and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of Kissy's Stay Put Services, a criminalized survivor's domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy organization serving the Twin Cities of Minnesota, to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

Each year, at least 69,000 people are booked into local jails in Minnesota. At Kissy's Stay Put Services, criminalized survivor's black and brown women are being increasingly being criminalized for trying to keep themselves safe. This causes a ripple effect on the whole family, from losing employment and housing, and children being out of school for an extended period of times, which creates more unintended consequences for the whole family. I support this bill because many survivors become entangled in the justice system because of their direct abuse from their abusers. The Act offers a more path to healing, accountability, and community reintegration. Traditional sentencing guidelines do not take these experiences into consideration furthering the harm that black and brown women families are already experiencing.

The Survivor's Justice Act gives judges greater flexibility to consider a person's history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. This bill acknowledges that survival responses to domestic or sexual violence often lead survivors into the criminal justice system. This does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows courts to evaluate the full picture and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice.

As a program serving survivors who often experience intersecting forms of violence, we know that policies like this play a vital role in preventing additional harm and fostering true healing, accountability, and community reintegration.

On behalf of the communities and survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivors Justice Act.

Sincerely,

Kissy Coakley
Executive Director
Kissy's Stay Put Services
kissystayput@gmail.com



360 Communities®
Help in the moment. Hope for the future.

March 6, 2026

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing on behalf of 360 Communities, a domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy organization serving Dakota County, to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

As Dakota County's sole domestic and sexual abuse shelter, we see every day how trauma, coercion, and abuse can shape the choices survivors make. Many become involved in the criminal legal system because they're acting under pressure, responding to threats, or simply trying to stay safe. Unfortunately, current sentencing practices don't always recognize these realities, which can leave survivors facing even more harm. Based on what we witness through our shelter, advocacy, and violence prevention work, we know survivors need a system that understands the impact of their victimization. Other states have already shown that more trauma-informed approaches can reduce unnecessary incarceration and lead to better, more healing-focused outcomes. Minnesota can do the same.

Because many survivors become entangled in the justice system as a result of their abuse, this Act offers a more just path to healing, accountability, and community reintegration.

The Survivor's Justice Act gives judges greater flexibility to consider a person's history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. This bill acknowledges that survival responses to domestic or sexual violence often lead survivors into the criminal justice system. This does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows courts to evaluate the full picture and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice.

As a program serving survivors who often experience intersecting forms of violence, we know that policies like this play a vital role in preventing additional harm and fostering true healing, accountability, and community reintegration.

On behalf of the communities and survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivors Justice Act.

Sincerely,



Jeff Mortensen
President & CEO
360 Communities



March 9, 2026

Dear Chair Moller and Committee Members,

The Legal Rights Center enthusiastically supports HF 2976, a long-overdue bill that acknowledges the significant, life-long trauma of domestic abuse, sexual violence, and sex trafficking and its impact on behavior.

As a nonprofit public defense corporation, the Legal Rights Center represents hundreds of indigent Minnesotans facing criminal charges each year. In our work, it is rare to encounter a client who has not suffered or witnessed some form of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking in their lifetime. Many experience this harm as children, some continue to experience it long into adulthood. No matter when it happens, every client is shaped immensely by the abuse and the trauma that comes with it.

In some cases, there is an obvious link between the criminal charge and a history of trauma. A person who has experienced domestic violence may act violently to protect themselves from an abuser and be charged with a crime for doing so. We also know that many abuse survivors suffer from PTSD, causing them to perceive danger where none exists. Responding with force or violence in those circumstances can also result in criminal charges. And many survivors use alcohol and drugs to cope with the trauma and PTSD. Drug- and alcohol-related charges therefore are extremely common among people who have suffered abuse.

In many cases, the link between abuse and criminal charges is less obvious, but nonetheless central to a fair and just resolution of the case. We have seen a history of abuse play a significant role in cases involving firearm possession, theft, disorderly conduct, receiving stolen property, and more.

The point is this: a shocking and devastating number of people have experienced domestic abuse, sexual violence, and sex trafficking. The consequences for these people are far-reaching and can be difficult to predict. The lack of comprehensive, widely-available mental and physical healthcare means that many people never heal from the trauma they have experienced. These people, many of whom are our clients, have been failed before—by society and, very often, the legal system. This bill can help us mitigate those failures. It is one way we can say to survivors: we see you, we are with you, you deserve more.

The Legal Rights Center urges you to support HF 2976.

Malaika Eban
Executive Director

Co- Chair Kelly Moller
Pub. Safety Fin. & Policy Committee

Co- Chair Paul Novotny
Pub. Safety Fin. & Policy Committee

Re: HF 2976 (Hollins)

Dear Chair Moller, Chair Novotny and Members of the Public Safety Finance Committee,

On behalf of Minnesota Freedom Fund Action (MFFA), I write in support of Minnesota HF 2976.

MFFA writes in support of HF 2976, legislation that allows courts to consider when a person's experience of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or sex trafficking contributed to the offense for which they were convicted.

Many people who come into contact with the criminal legal system carry histories of trauma, coercion, and violence that shape the circumstances surrounding their involvement in the system. Too often, those experiences are not fully considered during sentencing. HF 2976 helps address this gap by allowing courts to consider survivor experiences when determining whether a mitigated departure from sentencing guidelines is appropriate.

This issue matters deeply to MFFA because our work puts us in direct relationship with people navigating the criminal legal system every day. Through our organizing, court watching, and post-release support work, we regularly see how survivors of violence, trafficking, and abuse can become entangled in the system in ways that do not reflect the full context of their lives. Policies that allow courts to recognize and respond to that reality help create a more thoughtful and humane approach to justice.

In addition, HF 2976 creates a pathway for survivors whose victimization contributed to their conviction to seek clemency or a pardon after completing their sentence. This recognizes the circumstances around survivors' actions and supports the fact that survivors deserve a meaningful opportunity to rebuild their lives and move forward.

Minnesota Freedom Fund Action respectfully urges the committee to support HF 2976.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Danielle Matthias

Danielle Matthias
Director of Policy & Advocacy
Minnesota Freedom Fund

Dear Chair Moller, Chair Novotny, and members,

I am writing to you to ask you to support H.F. 2976, which would allow courts to consider a defendant's experience of abuse when determining their sentence. My name is Lauren, and I am a survivor of domestic violence who has been criminalized in connection to my experience of violence. I am also a domestic violence shelter advocate at Missions Inc. Programs located in Plymouth.

When I was pregnant with my youngest daughter, my daughter's father was domestically abusing me. During that time, I was arrested on drug charges. I take full responsibility for my actions that led to that arrest. I'm not making excuses for my behavior but instead sharing how the physical and emotional abuse I experienced impacted the decisions I made, ultimately leading to the charges. Throughout my relationship with my abuser, he isolated, degraded, and controlled me. He was extremely violent towards me when I didn't do what he wanted – choking me, punching me in the face, and even setting my hand on fire because I talked to another man. To this day, I experience dental issues due to the severity of his abuse. I tell you this so you understand why I was terrified of disobeying him. When he told me to engage in illegal behavior, I knew exactly what would happen if I said no.

This bill would help our justice system meaningfully recognize and respond to survivors like me, whose actions are tied to this abuse. This would ensure that the court considers our experience of violence. I was entered into drug court and was able to go through substance use treatment. I gave birth to my daughter while in treatment, and I have been sober ever since. At no point during my court case did I have an opportunity to talk about the abuse I experienced because the judge and attorneys did not consider it 'relevant'. However, I assure you that the abuse I experienced impacted every aspect of my life and was deeply pertinent to my case.

After I was arrested, my probation officer helped me reach out to Missions Inc. Programs, and I lived at the domestic violence shelter for five months before finding housing. A few years later, I became an advocate at the same shelter that helped me when I was afraid and alone. When I speak to current residents, I let them know I've been where they are, so they can see what healing can look like.

Other states have already passed legislation like this, ensuring criminalized survivors are treated with the nuance and context required to create just outcomes. I hope you will make Minnesota the next state to recognize the unique harm faced by criminalized survivors.

Please support H.F. 2976 so that people in situations like mine have their full experience considered by the court. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

Thank you,

Lauren
Domestic Abuse Advocate
Mission Inc. Programs



someplace safe
SAFETY. OPTIONS. HOPE.

Crime Victim Advocacy, Parenting Time Centers, and Community Thrift Stores

March 5, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and Members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of Someplace Safe, a program that assists victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sex trafficking, labor trafficking, and other crimes—including stalking, elder abuse, identity theft, robbery, and theft—as they navigate the social, emotional, and economic impacts of victimization on their path from crisis to healing. Services are provided across Big Stone, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wadena, and Wilkin Counties. We write to express support for the Survivor’s Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

Through our work with survivors, we see firsthand how trauma, coercion, and abuse can shape a person’s actions. Many survivors become involved in the criminal legal system because of conduct directly related to their victimization—acting under duress, responding to threats, or attempting to survive violence. Traditional sentencing guidelines do not always take these experiences into account, which can compound the harm of the original abuse.

The Survivor’s Justice Act gives judges greater flexibility to consider a person’s history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. The bill does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows courts to evaluate the full circumstances and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice. Similar legislation in other states has shown positive impacts by reducing unnecessary incarceration and supporting rehabilitation and community reintegration.

As a program serving survivors who often experience intersecting forms of violence, we know policies like this help prevent additional harm and support meaningful paths to healing and accountability.

On behalf of the communities and survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivor’s Justice Act.

Sincerely,

Thank you,
Sheila Korby
Executive Director, Someplace Safe

Dear Co-Chair Moller, Co-Chair Novotny, and members of the committee,

I am writing in support of the Survivors Justice Act, SF 3002/HF 2976. My name is Bukola Oriola, and I am a former member of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking and Executive Director, The Enitan Story, a Fridley based nonprofit organization. I am also a survivor of labor trafficking and domestic violence in Minnesota.

While I was not criminalized during my experience, my trafficker used the legal system to threaten me and nearly sent me to jail for a crime committed against me. Many survivors are not so fortunate. In my work providing direct services to victims and survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence through The Enitan Story, I frequently support clients who have been criminalized because of their trafficking experience.

This bill would help our justice system meaningfully recognize and respond to survivors whose actions are tied to their abuse, ensuring that all survivors' experiences of violence are considered by the court. This is critical to creating a trauma-informed legal system.

Other states have already passed similar legislation, treating criminalized survivors with the nuance and context required for just outcomes. I hope Minnesota will be the next state to recognize the unique harm faced by survivors who have been criminalized.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Bukola Oriola
Executive Director, The Enitan Story/Former Member, U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking
Fridley, MN

3/9/2026

Dear Co-Chairs Moller and Novotny, and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of [program or organization name], a domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy organization serving [community/region], to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

Through our work with survivors, we see firsthand how trauma, coercion, and abuse can shape a person's actions. Many survivors become involved in the criminal legal system because of conduct directly related to their victimization. This can be because they are acting under duress, responding to threats, or attempting to survive violence. Traditional sentencing guidelines do not always take these experiences or their lasting impacts into account, compounding the harm of the original abuse and transforming the system into an agent of further harm. Similar legislation already exists in other states and has shown positive impacts by reducing unnecessary incarceration and focusing on rehabilitative and restorative practices.

Survivors are sometimes prosecuted for actions taken in the context of abuse—such as self-defense, coercion, or survival strategies. The Survivor's Justice Act ensures that when this happens, courts can consider the survivor's abuse and impose fairer sentences that reflect the reality of their situation.

The Survivor's Justice Act gives judges greater flexibility to consider a person's history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. This bill acknowledges that survival responses to domestic or sexual violence often lead survivors into the criminal justice system. This does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows courts to evaluate the full picture and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice.

As a program serving survivors who often experience intersecting forms of violence, we know that policies like this play a vital role in preventing additional harm and fostering true healing, accountability, and community reintegration.

On behalf of the survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivors Justice Act.

Sincerely,

Laura Jones, Grants & Evaluation Manager
Anna Perrotta, LICSW; Mental Health Therapist
Alexandra McDougall, Director of Outreach and Youth Engagement
Jonathan Wharton, Youth Engagement Coordinator
Carina Arnosti, Child and Family Advocate
Jake De Vera, Associate Director
Roxy Walker, Manager of Systems Change Advocacy
Kay Sheehan, Manager of Shelter and Legal Advocacy Services
Saran Cryer, LISW, Mental Health Shelter Therapist



March 9, 2026

Dear Co-Chairs Moller and Latz, and members of the committee,

I am writing on behalf of WoMen's Rural Advocacy Programs, Inc. (WRAP) a domestic violence and sexual violence advocacy organization serving Lincoln, Lyon, Redwood and Yellow Medicine Counties to express our strong support for the Survivor's Justice Act (S.F. 3002/H.F. 2976).

Through WRAP's work with survivors, our advocates regularly see how trauma, coercion, and abuse shape the decisions people make while trying to stay safe. In rural communities, where distance, isolation, and limited resources can intensify the dynamics of abuse, survivors may act under duress, respond to threats, or attempt to escape ongoing violence. We work with survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex trafficking—including youth and young adults—who sometimes become entangled in the criminal legal system because of actions directly connected to their victimization. When these survival responses intersect with the justice system, traditional sentencing guidelines do not always reflect the full context of abuse or its lasting impacts.

The Survivor's Justice Act gives judges greater flexibility to consider a person's history of domestic abuse, sexual violence, or sex trafficking when sentencing crimes connected to that trauma. This bill acknowledges that survival responses to domestic or sexual violence often lead survivors into the criminal justice system. This does not mandate reduced sentences; rather, it allows for courts to evaluate the full picture and deliver outcomes that are fair, individualized, and grounded in justice.

As a program serving survivors who often experience intersecting forms of violence, we know that policies like this play a vital role in preventing additional harm and fostering true healing, accountability, and community reintegration.

On behalf of the communities and survivors we serve, we urge you to support the Survivors Justice Act.

Sincerely,

Becci ten Bense
Executive Director