



Commissioner's Office

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April 10, 2018

Rep. Lyndon Carlson, Sr.
479 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Carlson:

I am writing to express my support for the House Public Safety Omnibus bill, contained in HF2792, as it relates to the Department of Corrections (DOC). As the new Commissioner of Corrections, I am deeply grateful that this bill includes the Governor's budget and policy recommendations for our department.

From the beginning of the Walz-Flanagan administration, the top priority for DOC has been maximizing the safety of Minnesota's prisons for our staff and the nearly 10,000 people incarcerated in them -- along with the safety of our agents and the thousands of people they supervise across Minnesota. This emphasis on safety stems from the grim reminder of July and September 2018, when Minnesota lost two correctional officers in the line of duty.

The deaths of Officers Joe Gomm and Joe Parise, serve as a reminder of the inherent danger of service in the field of corrections and the need for Minnesota to make investments that make our prisons safer. Our emphasis on safety as we work with the legislature also reflects the reality that it is the most basic of human needs.

We are specifically thankful for HF2792 including the addition of 110 corrections officers, with about 90 of those positions being added in the upcoming biennium. It is critical that we remember that nothing happens inside of a correctional facility without security personnel who have one of the hardest jobs in our state government.

Given that 95% of those serving sentences in our prisons will return to our communities, it is a necessity to have evidence-based rehabilitative programming. The opportunities for those serving sentences in our prisons to access medical care, mental health services, treatment, educational, vocational, work programming are dependent upon corrections officers.

Corrections is also more than prisons. The Department of Corrections provides supervision for both adults and juveniles in 53 counties across Minnesota. We also collaborate with and provide funding to the community corrections and county probation delivery systems who play a critical public safety role in Minnesota.

HF2792 reflects a comprehensive, sound, and balanced investment in corrections which will not only keep those inside our prisons safe but also increase the safety of our communities. It provides for critical health services including behavioral health, support for intensive case management and supervision, an Ombudsperson for Corrections, restrictive housing reform, and

juvenile justice initiatives which are all components of a multifaceted approach to ensuring safety inside our facilities and in our communities across Minnesota.

The Department of Corrections is grateful for the provisions in HF2792 and will benefit from these investments in our work. We are also thankful for the work of your committee to diligently consider the omnibus bills before you and recognizing the importance of the provisions in the Public Safety Omnibus bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Schnell", followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Schnell
Commissioner