



AT MITCHELL HAMLINE SCHOOL OF LAW

Re: HR 707 and SF 1683

To Members of the Minnesota Senate and Minnesota House of Representatives,

I urge passage of HR 707 and SF 1683 to strengthen the recommendations of the *Criminal Sexual Conduct Statutory Reform Working Group* that were submitted to the Minnesota legislature in January 2021. The proposed legislation will clarify inconsistencies in previous definitions, terms, etc.

The most important provision in these two bills, however, is the definition of a new crime of sexual extortion. Sexual extortion occurs when a victim is coerced or forced into producing sexual images or performing unwanted sexual acts through threats to their property, reputation, access to housing, physical safety, financial security, disclosure of certain types of information, discrimination, or other forms of harm. Sexual extortion disproportionately targets women; however, all people are vulnerable and can be affected.

Transparency International, a global organization operating in over a hundred countries to combat corruption, issued a report in 2020 on sexual extortion and highlighted cases in schools, police stations, immigration centers, courthouses, and elsewhere in which government officials and civil servants abused their power to sexually exploit others. Examples include:

- Police officers demanding sex to avoid arrest or detention;
- Teachers requiring sex in exchange for a passing grade;
- Judges trading favorable rulings for coerced sexual acts;
- Immigration officers exploiting asylum seekers or refugees for sex;
- Public service officials sexually extorting employees during hiring or promotions;
- Other officials demanding sex in exchange for land, a business permit, food, water, public housing, or other services.

The report analyzed existing legal frameworks and found that they often fail to adequately cover sexual extortion.

Sexual extortion has been criminalized in several states. It is time for sexual extortion to be clarified and criminalized in Minnesota.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen J. Kennedy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen J. Kennedy, Ph.D.

Executive Director, World Without Genocide and Adjunct Professor of Law