



Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Minnesota Sex Offender Program

February 29, 2012

Representative Jim Abeler and members of the Health and Human Services Finance Committee,

As you discuss HF 2440 "Sexual violence prevention demonstration grants money appropriated", I would like to remind the committee of a resource that details sexual violence prevention and the need for increased prevention efforts in Minnesota.

In January of 2011, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) submitted a facility study assessing "Options for Managing the Growth and Cost of the Minnesota Sex Offender Program". This report was mandated by the 2010 capital investment bill along with its allocation of \$47.5 million. [Minn. Stat. § 189, subd. 5 (2010).] These monies were requested to ensure the Minnesota Sex Offender Program (MSOP) would have sufficient space and would not exceed capacity. During discussion and debate at the Legislature regarding this allocation, questions emerged focusing on the feasibility of continued expansion of MSOP.

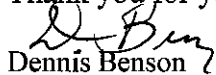
In that report, sexual violence prevention was highlighted as the most efficient method of slowing the cost and growth of MSOP. As stated in the executive summary, "By investing in a population-based public health approach to sexual violence prevention, Minnesota will be investing in long-term cost-savings for the state. There is a complex web of social norms, environmental factors, peer influence and individual decision-making that precedes an act of sexual violence. Ample opportunities for intervention and prevention exist."¹

Specific recommendations for preventing the perpetration of sexual abuse included in the report:

- Allocate funding specifically to sexual violence prevention efforts and research as future cost-savings for the State of Minnesota.²
- Identify, assess and provide resources for children who have experienced trauma including victims of sex crimes and those who demonstrate sexual behavior problems.³
- Increase and strengthen community resources available for juveniles and adults who have committed acts of sexual abuse, exploitation or violence.⁴

As the Executive Director of MSOP, I have spoken repeatedly for the need for prevention efforts in our state. I have hired a Prevention Policy Director who works across DHS and partners with other state agencies and organizations like the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault to strengthen prevention approaches and to provide education and awareness to policy makers. Increased sexual violence prevention efforts are crucial for not only slowing the growth of MSOP, but to prevent victimization and the widespread harm of sexual violence in our state.

Thank you for your work on this important issue.


Dennis Benson

Executive Director, Minnesota Sex Offender Program

¹ Department of Human Services, *Options for Managing the Cost and Growth of the Minnesota Sex Offender Program: Facility Study* (St. Paul, January 2011), p.6

² *Ibid*, p. 47.

³ *Ibid*, p. 48.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 58.