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April 25, 2022

The Honorable Rena Moran
Ways and Means Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
449 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Moran and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share the perspective of the Department of Corrections on House File 4608. I am grateful for the thoughtful, comprehensive approach of Chair Mariani in addressing the critical public safety challenges of our state. We share the goal of creating a safer Minnesota, now and always. The opportunity to invest in what works - in evidence-based, proven policies – is more critical than ever, and House File 4608 does just that.

Community safety is only possible when our communities, the state, and each of us work together to offer opportunities, hold people accountable, deliver justice, and meet the needs of all Minnesotans. A comprehensive response to crime is critical because, as you know, over 95% of those who are in Minnesota's prisons are going to return home to our communities. Our safety depends on their successful reintegration into society.

The investments and policy included in House File 4608 recognize that public safety and transformation do not start or end with punishment and incarceration. The provisions within this bill create a long-term, comprehensive approach to the underlying causes of crime and disorder, while at the same time taking effective, immediate steps to address the very real uptick in violence we have recently seen. It provides tools and resources for our communities and the state to work together, to transform lives, and ensure accountability.

As it relates to the work of the DOC, House File 4608 invests in critical data infrastructure upgrades, transformational services to help ensure those who are incarcerated return to their communities successfully, and responsibly funds correctional supervision across our state for the 100,000 individuals living and working in our communities on probation and supervised release.

In particular, the bill invests in the following ways:

- **Funds a Statewide Public Safety Data Infrastructure** to replace critically antiquated DOC systems with data-driven service delivery and to create a statewide hub of correctional supervision data for all counties and partners.
- **Funds correctional supervision and creates an evidence-based path forward** to fund a more equitable, professional community supervision system across the state into the future.
- **Creates new pathways from prison to employment** by establishing a Public Safety and Economic Opportunity Unit that will link training, education, and industry in prisons to job placements upon release and allows the DOC to greatly expand partnerships with higher-education institutions for degree-track classes.

- **Provides body-worn cameras for corrections officers** to better ensure safety and transparency on behalf of department staff and the incarcerated population.
- **Creates a Family Support Unit and invests in meaningful connections**, recognizing that research consistently shows that strengthening family ties during incarceration significantly reduces the risk of reoffending.
- **Invests in the development and implementation of a Healing House model of transitional housing** by funding a project manager to build partnerships with the community, philanthropy, and the state to create a space where justice-system involved Native American women can begin their journey towards healing and housing stability.
- **Includes the Minnesota Rehabilitation and Reinvestment Act (MRRRA)**, similar to evidence-based programs in 38 other states, to require personalized assessments and rehabilitation plans for each incarcerated individual that would result in earned incentivized release from confinement if meaningful engagement is demonstrated. Savings are then reinvested in victim support services, crime prevention and intervention, community-based programs, and the state's general fund.
- **Creates an Indeterminate Sentence Review Board**, a five-member board to replace sole discretion by the commissioner of corrections on parole decisions.
- **Invests in project management** to ensure a more strategic and efficient approach in how the DOC's mission is accomplished.
- **Funds increases in the cost of property insurance** to recognize the reality of steeply increased rates and of maintaining 11 state-owned prisons across the state, totaling 336 buildings.

The investments above will allow the DOC to create more successful public safety outcomes and I am grateful for their inclusion in the bill.

I would be remiss not to raise my concerns about the use of the cash balance in the DOC's correctional industries program (MINNCOR) account. As you may know, the legislature established the MINNCOR program, "for the purpose of providing adequate, regular and suitable employment, educational training, and to aid" incarcerated individuals (M.S. 241.27) and mandated that MINNCOR be financially self-sufficient. As such, depletion of the \$7 million reserves of MINNCOR would damage the program and make its viability extremely difficult.

Again, I am grateful for the leadership of Chair Mariani to effectively address crime and public safety challenges through the investments and policy included in House File 4608. This bill will allow the DOC and partners across the state to be better equipped to accomplish the shared value of creating a safer Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul P. Schnell", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul P. Schnell, Commissioner
Minnesota Department of Corrections