

Members of the House Public Safety Committee,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota is an organization devoted to preserving the rights and liberties enshrined in our constitution and law.

We are writing this letter to urge members to oppose HF 3380.

Violent crimes involving firearms are reprehensible and a clear threat to public safety. But we do not believe that increasing sentencing is the solution to that problem. In fact, it's an old tactic that has been proven wrong time and time again.

The “tough on crime” philosophy and the “three strikes” style increased sentencing have plagued the criminal justice system for a long time now.

Extreme sentencing laws and practices are keeping people in prison for far longer than ever before. The result is that more people are spending more of their lives in prison than at any point in U.S. history. In Minnesota, imprisonment rates grew an astonishing 51% from 2000-2016. The focus should be on reducing prison populations, not adding harsh penalties.

These increased sentences are not effective deterrents, and they destroy a person's chance at rehabilitation, reunification with family, and reintegration into society. With convictions disproportionately affecting poor people and people of color, these sentences are also exacerbating extreme racial disparities in the criminal legal system and tearing vulnerable communities apart.

We strongly urge the committee to oppose HF 3380.

Munira Mohamed

Policy Associate, ACLU-MN