



January 23rd, 2023

Chair Moller and members of the Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee,

The Minnesota Justice Research Center (MNJRC) writes in regards to HF 147, introduced by Representative Patricia Mueller, to expand the Alternatives to Incarceration program to Mower County.

According to a recent report by the Council of State Governments, prison admissions in Minnesota are driven by revocations from supervised release and probation. Over 60 percent of prison admissions result from supervision failures, making up approximately 25 percent of the prison population on any given day and costing taxpayers more than \$77 million per year. Many of these people are warehoused in prison for 60-90 days, do not receive any rehabilitation services, and then are churned back into the world. The Department of Corrections' own research shows that these practices increase recidivism.

Failed drug tests are one of the top reasons for technical revocations to prison and Minnesota's Alternatives to Incarceration program is designed to assist supervised release and probation agents working with nonviolent controlled substance clients to identify community options to address and correct violations. Anoka County has reported positive results from the program as probation agents are linking clients with resources instead of sending them to prison.

In a similar program, Hennepin County is saving money and promoting success by emphasizing encouragement for negative tests rather than punishment for positive

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results. Since these reforms, drug violations have decreased without adversely affecting community safety.

For community supervision to be successful, resources need to be available in communities across the state and incarceration should be a last resort for violations. For example, a 2022 report from the Department of Corrections showed that a staggering 25% of people released from prisons enter into homelessness. This is not setting up people to prosper while on supervision. Preventing crime means ensuring that people on supervision have the opportunities to find housing, employment, and substance abuse treatment.

The Alternatives to Incarceration program is a step in that direction, but the program's current statutory criteria of a "nonviolent offender" creates barriers for those who might have the greatest needs for services and we encourage the legislature to explore expanding to other populations such as primary caregivers of children and those with mental health challenges.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Justin Terrell".

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