

February 15, 2021

Dear Committee Chair and Members:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support for the pending bill, HF 707, which addresses critically needed changes to the Minnesota Criminal Sexual Conduct statutes. My career which spanned 32 years as an advocate, MN State Sexual Assault Director and Executive Director of the MN Coalition Against Sexual Assault until my retirement in 2014. This allowed me many opportunities to observe and respond to the challenges related to sexual violence. I am very encouraged by the recommendations of the CSC Statutory Work Group and the resulting HF707.

Minnesota took the lead in the US in the mid-1970s when the MN legislature drafted the current CSC statutes to more deliberately respond to the systemic issues that were being raised by victim/survivors, the young advocacy community, and traditional criminal justice professionals. Those statutes have served us well; they have been tweaked over the years as the context of sexual violence, investigation, prosecution and punishment have changed. Increased awareness of the frequency of this crime, the resulting trauma to victim/survivors and the community, the disparity of impact on BIPOC communities, the ongoing dialog about treatment and incarceration of those who offend, and the real potential of prevention of offending behavior have led to this latest and timely call for updating the language of the statutes.

HF707 effectively addresses, as a start, the most problematic sections of the current statutes adding clarity to what has long been known as "unwieldy" language for all responders and the public. The reorganization of the statute to delineate between adult and minor victims and the consistency of language regarding age are welcome changes. Additionally, the new language that addresses sexual extortion fills an important gap that has left many victim/survivors without means to access justice. I ask you to heed the wisdom of the Work Group members, the bill authors and the experts who will explain well the impetus for these changes and pass HF 707

The report is careful to note issues that were beyond the reach of this Work Group: systemic racism/sexism/homophobia; lack of effective training and knowledgeable leadership among responding professions; appropriate and effective treatment and control of those who offend, among others. I would hope that work will find ample support from the legislature when the time comes.

Thank you for all you do to protect the citizens of Minnesota who experience crimes such as sexual violence. We envision a state that works to ensure justice to sexual assault survivors, treats offenders humanely and responsibly, and works to promote prevention in communities.

Sincerely,



Donna Dunn