



OFFICE OF THE HENNEPIN COUNTY ATTORNEY

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN COUNTY ATTORNEY

February 4, 2019

Re: Support for HF 591

Dear Members of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee:

I write to you in support of HF 591, the bill that would authorize the inclusion of family impact statements in pre-sentence investigations, chief authored by Representative Heather Edelson.

When an individual is convicted of a crime, the individual's sentencing does not occur in a vacuum. Current law requires a court to consider a number of factors, including the individual's possible chemical dependency and their status as a veteran. Similarly, convicted person's status as a parent, guardian, or caregiver to a minor child is potentially very relevant to that individual's amenability to probation. Although not necessarily determinative, a sentencing judge should have clarity about the impact a jail or prison sentence may have on the child of a defendant and should consider what negative effects may stem from temporarily separating a child from their caregiver. Public safety is not served if the negative effect on children is never even weighed against the incarceration of the parent.

I recognize that there are some convictions, based on particularly egregious acts, that require county attorneys to immediately pursue termination of parental rights; in such cases, my office continues to try to serve the best interests of the children involved. Nonetheless, the information contained in a family impact statement would remain relevant to a pre-sentence investigation. When our courts are able to consider a convicted person's circumstances holistically, the best interests of children and families are well served. I believe that HF 591 allows courts to more meaningfully make these decisions.

I hope that you will consider passage of Rep. Edelson's bill. If we can provide any additional information, or if you wish to discuss, please do not hesitate to call.

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael O. Freeman".

MICHAEL O. FREEMAN  
Hennepin County Attorney