



Representative Dave Pinto, Chair  
Representative Carlos Mariani, Chair  
State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55103

Re: Joint Hearing of the House Early Childhood and Public Safety and Criminal Justice Finance and Policy Committees

March 31, 2022

Dear Chairs Pinto and Mariani and Members of the House Early Childhood and Public Safety and Criminal Justice Finance and Policy Committees:

On behalf of the Children's Cabinet, its commissioners and leaders across 22 state agencies, I am writing to express gratitude for this joint hearing to bring attention to the need to better identify and address the needs of children impacted by incarceration and urge support of the Department of Corrections and other Governor's policy and supplemental budget proposals supporting children of incarcerated parents. Please see the attached document summarizing these proposals.

Through engagement with families, our advisory councils and other stakeholders, the priority to better identify and support the needs of children and families affected by incarceration has been lifted up and prioritized by the Children's Cabinet. To help address these needs, cross-agency conversations have led to the development of these budget and policy proposals to increase access to family and community supports and continued conversations to ensure attention and support for these children and families who have often been overlooked by our state and local systems. We are pleased to see legislative leaders taking a similar coordinated approach on this important issue.

Preserving relationships with family members while an individual is incarcerated decreases the stress and trauma on children, promotes rehabilitation, and reduces recidivism for families. Studies repeatedly find a significant link between family contact and success when returning to community, further positively impacting the children. Our state systems are already serving children experiencing incarceration and could better support and create family connections including by creating the family support unit at DOC, providing access to no-cost phone calls and video visits, and prioritizing access to early childhood supports.

We are grateful for this joint hearing and support continued conversation to elevate the need for coordinated support for children affected by incarceration. This continued work will have benefits in multiple areas including family stability, healthy development, and public safety now and in the future.

Thank you,

Erin Bailey  
Assistant Commissioner and Children's Cabinet Executive Director