



February 28, 2023

Members of the Minnesota State Legislature
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Letter in Support of H.F. 1233 –

Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN), the coalition to end relationship abuse, writes in support of H.F. 1233 – a bill that would end the state-imposed abuse and trauma of children and youth through the practice of strip-searches. We are a statewide coalition that consists of over 80 member programs working to end relationship abuse. Our member programs provide direct services and support to survivors of domestic and sexual violence in all 87 counties in Minnesota.

Our criminal legal system has a long history of quietly incorporating state-sanctioned sexual, and physical abuse among those who are incarcerated by way of strip-searches. The sexual and physical trauma experienced by youth and adults who are incarcerated is routine and mortifying for those forced to experience it. Research shows that children and youth do not experience strip-searches in the same way – many equating the trauma and humiliation of a strip-search to sexual and physical abuse. Children who have been victim to other forms of violence are retraumatized when the right to their own bodily autonomy is taken away.

Strip-searches happen in correctional facilities, by investigators of child abuse, and even occur within our schools – traumatizing our children and youth each and every time. Strip-searches have also been used as a way to intentionally abuse children, creating a larger risk to their safety. If we want children and youth to feel safe within our schools, communities, and correctional facilities, we need to end the harmful and (re)traumatizing practice of strip-searches.

H.F. 1233 ends the harmful and often debilitating practice of strip-searching minors. The time is now to show youth that they are valued by no longer making them susceptible to physical and sexual abuse at the hands of our schools, state agencies, or other adults who have been put into positions to ensure their safety. We urge you to vote yes on H.F. 1233.

Sincerely,

Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director
Violence Free Minnesota

Shenika Chambers
Policy Program Manager
Violence Free Minnesota