



May 12, 2025

Chair Moller, Chair Novotny, Chair Latz, and Members of the Judiciary, Public Safety, and Corrections Finance and Policy Conference Committee:

I am writing to seek your support for the Senate appropriation of an additional \$1.75 million for Violent Crime Enforcement Teams (VCET), administered through Minnesota's Office of Justice Programs.

VCETs play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of violent crime and the opioid crisis in the City of Saint Paul. The Ramsey County Drug Task Force, a VCET serving our region, provides instrumental leadership and offers specialized investigative support to Saint Paul. While drug suppliers regularly cross jurisdictional boundaries throughout the State to further criminal enterprises, the work of our VCET task force regularly affects the drug supply in all parts of the State.

It concerns me the current funding amount is not changing with the addition of two new Drug Task Forces (including the newly formed West Metro Drug Task Force - VCET). I want to highlight the significant impact your support for additional funding could have on Saint Paul Police operations and our commitment to increase public safety and save lives.

The Need for Additional VCET Funding:

Currently, VCET funding has not kept pace with rising operational costs, nor does it fully meet the needs of law enforcement agencies working to combat violent crime and drug trafficking. Specifically, a 25% increase in funding would have the following impacts:

1. **Address Rising Costs:** The ability to absorb rising insurance premiums, fuel, salaries, and operational expenses without sacrificing core functions.
2. **Improved Investigation Capacity:** Increased investigative focus on overdose deaths, non-fatal overdoses, and violent crime investigations.
3. **Better Equipment:** Procurement of up-to-date technology and equipment to support efficient and effective investigations. This includes use of phone trackers and advanced surveillance tools.
4. **Operational Expansion:** Greater ability to coordinate multi-jurisdictional teams operating in support of Saint Paul Police investigators in our city.



If funding were to increase by 50%, the benefits would include:

1. **Specialized Personnel:** A funding source for additional detectives dedicated to investigating violent crimes and overdose cases, and the possibility of adding a Certified Peer Recovery Specialist to assist overdose victims.
2. **Support for Community Outreach:** Collaborating with community organizations to build awareness on overdose prevention and fentanyl dangers, thereby fostering greater community resilience.

Proven Impact and Return on Investment

The impact of VCET has a strong return on investment. In 2024, VCET grants totaling \$5,189,200 led to the seizure of over \$30 million in narcotics, including methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin. For every dollar invested in VCET, the state realized \$5.95 return on investment in seized drugs alone! This figure does not include firearms seizures or the broader benefits to public safety.

Looking Ahead

As the City of Saint Paul and the Task Force plan to constructively use future appropriations, I encourage you to consider the pressing need for additional resources for VCETs. Law Enforcement are faced with uncertainty in terms of this legislative session. I urge you to consider the ongoing need for increased support for VCET to maintain the effectiveness of these law enforcement units and their actions in the City of Saint Paul.

If there is an opportunity to meet with you or provide additional information to support VCET funding decisions, please let me know. Thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and for your continued support of law enforcement efforts to protect our communities.

Sincerely,

Axel C. Henry
CHIEF OF POLICE