March 9, 2025

Dear Members of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee:

NAMI Minnesota has grave concerns with HF 1257. This bill would eliminate the Public Safety Advisory Committee which was originally established as the "Ensuring Police Excellence and Improving Community Relations Advisory Council" in 2020. It came after the murder of George Floyd when tensions between communities and police were high.

The committee includes four legislators and five representatives of peace officers. It also includes six community members from the four councils (Latino Affairs, African Heritage, Asian-Pacific, Indian Affairs) along with members from NAMI Minnesota and Violence Free Minnesota.

The purpose of the council is to ensure the protection of civil and human rights and to provide for citizen involvement in policing policies, regulations, and supervision. The council is to advance policies and reforms that promote positive interactions between peace officers and the community.

As a member of the council I will agree that it got off to a slow start. It wasn't clear who was responsible for what. Meeting four times a year and initially virtually, made it difficult to become established. Two listening sessions were held, one in Duluth and one in New Hope. While some people did attend the session in Duluth no one attended the session in New Hope. There was not clear communication as to who was responsible for marketing the event.

At the end of last year, the council did hold a retreat where members learned more about why the council was established and brainstormed ideas on how to be more effective. It felt like we finally had some direction to move forward. We agreed that we should provide input on policies and rules, provide opportunities for input from our various constituencies, and research how other communities promoted positive interactions.

NAMI Minnesota believes it is premature to eliminate the council. We ask that you oppose the bill.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director

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