



March 13, 2023

Chair Moller & Members of the House Public Safety Finance & Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HF 1713. Missions Inc. Programs provides housing, emergency shelter, and supportive services to domestic violence survivors and those seeking recovery from substance use disorders. We work closely with many victims of domestic violence who seek reimbursement for costs associated with their victimization through the Minnesota Crime Victims Reparations Program. In order to qualify for reparations, victims need to demonstrate that they cooperated fully with law enforcement. HF 1713 would allow a signed document submitted by a victim services professional involved in the case to determine cooperation. This would be an enormous benefit to the victims we work with.

For many victims of domestic violence, participation in a court case against the person who harmed them is re-traumatizing and/or dangerous, even for those who may wish to pursue a criminal justice response. Working with a victim services professional can enhance a victim's safety during the court process. In addition, victim services professionals have ongoing contact with victims and are often able to provide the information necessary for reparations claims more quickly than law enforcement or prosecutors. Timely reparations are important as our clients frequently put off accessing mental health support or medical procedures because they are not able to afford them without reparations. By allowing a victim services professional to attest to their cooperation, more victims will be able to access the financial restitution they are entitled to.

As an example, we recently worked with a victim who was hospitalized as a result of abuse during the court case against the person who harmed her. She was denied crime victim reparations because she was unable to participate in the court case and was left with thousands of dollars in medical bills. If HF 1713 had been law at the time, we could have corroborated the extent of her injuries and explained why she was unable to participate in the prosecution at that time. While we cannot say for sure if her claim would have been accepted, at least she would have had the opportunity to demonstrate the full scope of her situation.

Finally, programs like ours that receive Crime Victim Services funding through the Department of Public Safety are strongly encouraged to assist victims in applying for crime victim reparations before we provide direct financial assistance. If more victims are able to access reparations, we can use our state funding more efficiently to meet the growing needs of the survivors we work with.

Please help support victims of domestic violence in our community by voting yes on HF 1713. Thank you for your time and consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Sarah Busch
Community Engagement & Outreach Manager
Missions Inc. Programs