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July 17, 2020

Senator Warren Limmer
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg, Room 3221
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Limmer:

The state of Minnesota, and the whole country, are in a state of economic hardship that will likely worsen over the next few years. Because of these challenges, it is more important than ever to ensure that Minnesota is investing in programs that give the greatest return on investment. This is especially true for public safety where the consequences of ineffective services are very high.

The Justice Reinvestment Initiative of the Council of State Governments (CSG) is a data-driven approach to reduce corrections spending and reinvest savings in strategies that can decrease recidivism and increase public safety. The Justice Reinvestment Initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance with support from The Pew Charitable Trust and there will be no cost to Minnesota. Experts from the CSG work with criminal justice stakeholders to collect data and use that information to shift spending away from ineffective policies and practices and reinvest in cost-effective strategies that increase public safety. Should Minnesota decide to implement any of the policy recommendations, funding is available to help offset the cost of implementation.

The Association of Minnesota Counties and the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties support the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, specifically to determine if there is a more efficient way to use resources in the probation sector.

Currently, there are three probation delivery systems in Minnesota: two are operated by counties and one is operated by the Department of Corrections. Legislative intent and statutory frameworks show that the county-based probation systems are intended to be funded through a 50/50 cost share between the county and the state. The funding for all three systems flows through the Department of Corrections (DOC) and historically the two county-based probation systems have not had commensurate annual increases in funding compared to the DOC. As an example, the 2018 DOC Probation Survey states that Community Corrections Act (CCA) counties and County Probation Officer (CPO) counties supervised 83% of probation cases in the state. However, those two systems did not receive legislative appropriations for the 2020/2021 biennium, while the DOC did. The state of Minnesota cannot continue to inadequately fund Minnesota's probation system without having a negative impact on public safety.

Though there is broad support for probation from legislators, the confusing and ineffective funding mechanism for Minnesota's probation system makes it difficult to ensure all three systems are funded equitably. The three

systems (CCA, CPO, and DOC) must work separately to compete for the same pot of money which is not required to be applied equally between the systems. The resulting disparities can create animosity between the state and counties taking away from the common goal to partner to provide the best possible services and outcomes to Minnesotans.

One solution to this problem is to ask the Council of State Governments to do a neutral, data-based evaluation of Minnesota's public safety system and provide policy recommendations that will increase the return on investment in the public safety sector. Given the budget difficulties ahead, it is important to make sure that every dollar Minnesota spends is used in the most effective manner.

We urge House and Senate leadership to support bringing the Justice Reinvestment Initiative to Minnesota. This free service to the state will provide non-binding recommendations that will lead to a more effective public safety system in Minnesota while keeping our communities safe.

Sincerely,



Midge Christianson, President
Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties



Carli Stark, Public Safety Policy Analyst
Association of Minnesota Counties