



To: Chair Peggy Scott; House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee; Administrator Marissa Mantefuel

Date: 2/17/2025

RE: Letter of Concern for HF7

Dear Chair Scott and committee members,

Violence Free Minnesota (VFM), the statewide coalition against relationship abuse, writes today to express concern about some portions of HF 7. VFM's 90 member programs provide direct services to domestic violence victims and survivors in every corner of the state. We see three provisions in the bill which may ultimately decrease the safety for victims and survivors.

First, and most concerning, is Section 7: Report on Criminal Charges and Cases Dismissed. Specifically, this section could put survivors at significant risk. Charges and cases are dismissed commonly and for varied reasons. If a domestic abuse case is dismissed, and the prosecutor has to publish on their website that the victim did not support the dismissal, then a situation has been created where the offender not only experienced no criminal liability for their crime but *also* they now know definitively that the victim was pushing for a punishment prior to the dismissal. This dynamic is dangerous for survivors. Even in a case where an offender pleads guilty in exchange for having one or more of the charges dropped, the victim would still be placed in a situation where they have to publicly reveal whether or not they supported the plea agreement which dropped some of the charges. Victim motivations and desires are varied, and under the current law, a victim is in control of their own narrative. They can decide whether to disclose their approval or disapproval, and they can make that decision based on their own safety, mental health, and other needs.

Second, we are concerned about requiring a publicly searchable database to be maintained revealing who paid bail for detainees in domestic violence cases. It is not uncommon for victims of domestic violence to pay the bail for their own abuser. There are various reasons for this, such as an attempt to avoid retributory violence or due to the fact that the abusive party is also often the sole breadwinner. Forcing this information to be public does not protect survivors. . Subjecting a victim/survivor to additional scrutiny is an added danger in an already difficult and painful situation.

Finally, we express concern about Section 12: Illegal Presence in a Stolen Vehicle. If an abuse victim has a partner who possesses a stolen vehicle, this provision would punish the victim forced to ride in the vehicle with their partner. Some abusive parties use force on their victims to commit crimes to gain leverage over the victim and prevent the victim from reaching out to police. For the foregoing reasons, Violence Free Minnesota expresses our concern about HF 7 and hopes not to see the above provisions encoded into law.

Thank you,

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