



INSTITUTE FOR JUSTICE

April 1, 2025

House Public Safety and Finance Committee
Minnesota Legislature
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard., Room 120
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Re: Letter in opposition to HF 467

Dear Chairs Novotny and Moller, Vice Chairs Feist and Witte, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter in opposition to HF 467. My name is Alasdair Whitney, and I am Legislative Counsel at the Institute for Justice (IJ). IJ is a non-profit public interest law firm that works to protect civil liberties. As part of our work, we fight against the use of unreasonable fines and fees and the harsh consequences that follow their imposition.

IJ encourages the Committee to oppose HF 467, which would repeal the sunset of correctional fees and allow these fees to continue to be imposed beyond the previously established expiration date of August 1, 2027. Opposing this bill is important for three reasons.

First, the imposition of supervision-related fees does not lend itself to ensuring compliance. Research has consistently shown that onerous fees imposed on individuals involved in the criminal justice system can have detrimental effects on their ability to successfully reintegrate into their communities.¹ Supervision-related fees can lead to increased financial instability, exacerbate stress and anxiety, and undermine efforts to rehabilitate and support individuals as they work to rebuild their lives. These difficulties, in turn, make it more difficult for people to comply with the terms of their supervision, and often result in recidivism.²

Second, and relatedly, many individuals transitioning back into society post-incarceration lack stable employment, secure housing, and durable social networks.³ Supervision-related financial burdens only exacerbate these challenges, particularly for those who may already be struggling to make ends meet. Eliminating these fees, as the Legislature intended to do when it passed the sunset provision that this bill seeks to repeal, will allow individuals to continue to work and provide for themselves and their families. And it would help ensure that the criminal justice system remains focused on its intended goals of rehabilitation and reintegration, rather than retribution and punishment.

Third, not only do these fees needlessly burden defendants—especially individuals belonging to marginalized communities—but they are also a poor way to finance the judiciary. Indeed, according to Minnesota Department of Corrections reports, only a fraction of assessed

¹ Ruhland, E., *The Impact of Fees and Fines for Individuals on Probation and Parole*, Robina Institute of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, Univ. of Minnesota (May 2023), available at <https://robinainstitute.umn.edu/articles/impact-fees-and-fines-individuals-probation-and-parole>.

² Harding, D., et al., *From Supervision to Opportunity: Reimagining Probation and Parole*, The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (Sept. 2022), available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/00027162221115486>.

³ *Id.*

fees is ever collected.⁴ Other state revenues must fill the funding gap and often pay for the costs of collecting outstanding court-imposed debts. The expense of this system to both defendants and the government is enormous, and sunseting these fees would address these runaway costs in a meaningful way.

Although abolishing these fees as the sunseting provision intends to do is not a silver bullet, it is a step in the right direction. Minnesotans are encumbered by millions of dollars of court-imposed debt that the state will, in many cases, never collect. These debts bring harsh consequences—they ruin credit scores, impede successful community reentry, and force individuals to resort to criminal activity just so they can afford to pay for basic living expenses. Experiencing the criminal justice system should not lead to a lifetime of punishment. IJ urges the Committee to oppose this bill and let existing law provide for the sunseting of correctional fees.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

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⁴ See Mitchell, K., *Understanding the Landscape of Fines, Restitution, and Fees for Criminal Convictions in Minnesota*, Robina Inst. of Criminal Law and Criminal Justice, Univ. of Minn. (August 2023), available at https://robinainstitute.umn.edu/sites/robinainstitute.umn.edu/files/2023-09/understanding_the_landscape_of_fines_restitution_and_fees_for_criminal_convictions_in_minnesota_0.pdf.