May 12, 2021

Heather Tubman-Carbone, PhD
Senior Policy Advisor
Bureau of Justice Assistance
810 Seventh Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20531

Jake Horowitz
Director, Public Safety performance project
The Pew Charitable Trusts
901 E. Street NW 10th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004-1409

Dear Dr. Tubman-Carbone and Mr. Horowitz:

As state leaders, we share the priority of keeping our fellow Minnesotans safe. We aim to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to protect and strengthen the safety and connectedness of communities in every corner of our state. Like all states across the country, Minnesota must engage in critical and difficult conversations about the efficiency and effectiveness of criminal justice system interventions, our performance in preventing and detecting crime, and our ability to provide responsive services to crime victims. There are no easy answers to the complex challenges we face, but we know that state investments in the criminal justice system must reflect effective stewardship of resources to achieve our shared justice objectives. To successfully protect and grow the safety of our communities, we must focus on effective crime reduction efforts, the efficient operation of our court system, and effective intervention services that aid those reentering society and reduces reoffending and victimization.

While developing clarity on sustainable system-wide costs is important in the best of times, the coronavirus pandemic will have significant impacts on Minnesota’s budget for years to come. Now more than ever, it is essential that we bring together an array of stakeholders from the legislative, judicial, and criminal justice practitioner level to identify, analyze, and develop smart strategies to address both our immediate and long-range community safety challenges.

We write to request establishment of a partnership between the State of Minnesota and The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center for technical assistance provided through the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. The CSG Justice Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Assistance and the Pew Charitable Trusts, will support Minnesota’s efforts to identify a balanced and sustainable model for funding an effective criminal justice infrastructure in Minnesota. Through technical assistance provided by the CSG Justice Center through a Justice Reinvestment process. By
engaging a broad range of stakeholders, we will identify areas of priority and common interest across state agencies, the judiciary, our counties, and local municipalities.

Corrections is currently among the fastest growing expenditures in the State of Minnesota’s budget. Current annual cost of managing correctional facilities, supporting county supervision partners, and providing reentry services totals well over $600 million. Taxpayers rightly expect that these funds are spent to make our communities safer. As budgets have grown, and complex funding formulas evolved, Minnesota has not completed a holistic assessment of how the state allocates this large portion of its budget. We endeavor to administer a state correctional system that wisely and efficiently uses an evidence-based lens for correctional service delivery. Achieving community safety and criminal justice system effectiveness demands thoughtful review of the state’s investments, and we look to the partnership with the CSG Justice Center to assist the state in accomplishing this objective.

This partnership between the CSG Justice Center, and the co-equal branches - Legislative, Judicial, and Executive - along with the Minnesota Departments of Corrections and Public Safety, the state’s judicial system, and our county partners will focus on:

- A comprehensive review of all state corrections and public safety spending in Minnesota;
- Analysis of the distribution of resources across the three community supervision delivery systems, to align funding with outcomes;
- Identify strategies to increase sustainability and reduce competitive demand for resources across community safety and criminal justice – law enforcement, victim services, the judiciary, and corrections;
- Analysis of the existing prison population-based formula model for funding the Department of Corrections and the impact on county partners and public safety outcomes regarding how facilities and community supervision are funded;
- Identify approaches to advance the sustainability of Minnesota’s corrections system while also improving service delivery effectiveness;
- Identify strategies to ensure the equitable distribution of criminal justice system investments by both individual and location across Minnesota.

Like the other states who have partnered with the CSG Justice Center on Justice Reinvestment, Minnesota hopes to engage in outcome-focused discussions around effective public safety interventions, efficient and sustainable application of taxpayer resources, and meaningful coordination of our criminal justice responses. Ensuring safe and connected communities requires a judicial system that is sufficiently resourced to meet the demands of its populace in applying the rule of law. In addition to state funding, local and county governments spend considerable resources on law enforcement, crime detection, victim services, detention facilities, and jails. Prudent management of correctional spending will allow the state to invest funds appropriately across the entire criminal justice system. We must ensure that our courts, law enforcement, correctional facilities, systems of community supervision, and victim services are all reasonably resourced to effectuate accountability and increase community safety.

We hope to work with the CSG Justice Center to envision a more fiscally transparent, accountable, and balanced approach to Minnesota’s allocation of criminal justice budgets, and deliver Minnesotans greater efficiency, more safety, and deeper levels of community connectedness.
Sincerely,

Tim Walz
Governor

Lorie S. Gildea
Chief Justice

Paul Gazelka
Senate Majority Leader

Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Rich Sve
Lake County Commissioner
President, Association of Minnesota Counties

Julie Rosen
Chair of the Senate Finance Committee