To: Community Supervision Advisory Committee
cc: Kelly Mitchell, Assistant Commissioner Community Services and Reentry
Molly Bruner, Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties
Jonathan Schiro, Minnesota Association of County Probation Officers
Jacob McClellan, Department of Corrections

From: Will Cooley, Policy Director, Minnesota Justice Research Center
Zeke Caligiuri, Community Engagement Manager, Minnesota Justice Research Center
Date: February 13, 2025
Subject: Intensive Supervised Release

Chairs Mitchell, Bruner and Schiro and members of the Community Supervision Advisory Committee,

In 2023, the Minnesota Justice Research Center initiated the “Transforming Community Supervision” project to improve public safety, promote better outcomes for people on probation and supervised release, and decrease the cycles of revoking people to prison and jail. As part of this effort, MNJRC Community Engagement Manager Zeke Caligiuri interviewed people currently on supervision and discussed the hurdles they are facing to successfully completing their terms.

Many interviewees stressed the importance of changing the policies and practices of Intensive Supervised Release (ISR). In order for a program like ISR to be effective, the culture of ISR needs to shift from punishment to intensive support. A central problem with ISR is that it adds more rules and obstacles to individuals already feeling overwhelmed with the reentry process. When there is an excessive focus on monitoring and punishing people rather than supporting reintegration, ISR will continue to have high rates of revocation.

The Minnesota Justice Research Center is pleased to see the recommendations from the Community Supervision Advisory Committee to “transform ISR into a person-centered supervision model that balances public safety with a more flexible, individualized approach.” We agree with many of the proposed changes listed in the November, 2024 report.

However, to implement these changes, we recommend intentional improvements to collaborative case planning **while people are still incarcerated and preparing for release**. As

the report states, release plans require “multi-disciplinary online meetings including the case manager, ISR agent, and client prior to release.”

Formerly incarcerated people express doubts about how this vital process currently unfolds, stating that the case planning in prisons is basic and rarely designed to meet the needs of the individual person to prepare for this major life transition. Many case managers inside Department of Corrections facilities did not seem prepared for or invested in the job. Incarcerated people often felt they were merely signing paperwork rather than truly engaging in thoughtful reentry plans that included state identification applications, health insurance enrollment, and finding housing.

Community supervision case planning inside correctional facilities, particularly for Minnesotans about to go on ISR, should be viewed as a crucial step in identifying and addressing an individual's specific risks and needs. These tailored interventions should include a detailed plan of action including locating housing, treatment programs, community resources, employment assistance, and an overview of supervision conditions to promote successful reintegration.

Again, we thank the Committee for addressing ISR and for making consequential recommendations. We look forward to further collaborations with the Committee to ensure that ISR is transformed from a system stressing punishment and surveillance to support and reintegration. The first step in that process is for the Department of Corrections to truly invest in effective release case planning in its facilities.

Sincerely,
Will Cooley and Zeke Caligiuri
Minnesota Justice Research Center