

From: [Mari Hirabayashi](#)
To: [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)
Subject: Support Cap on Probation
Date: Wednesday, December 25, 2019 1:01:26 AM

Hello,

I recently learned that a bill has been introduced to have a 5 year cap on probation. I would like to offer my full support for this measure. As a lifelong Minnesotan I would very much like to see a criminal justice system based in restoration, forgiveness, and reconciliation that better reflects the generous hearts of the people I have known in my lifetime here.

Thankyou,
Mari Hirabayashi
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From: [Tmkerres Yahoo](#)
To: [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)
Subject: Probation
Date: Thursday, December 26, 2019 2:24:24 PM

To whom it may concern

I am in support of caps on probation lengths because this measure would reduce disparities by providing more consistency in sentencing, and also benefit the greater economy with sooner freedom for those who have served their time. Probation is expensive. This should be for anyone law abiding after a reasonable probation, after release from prison or jail. It's good that this change would not apply to sex offenders (any kind of sex offender, no matter what, should be on probation).

T Schicker



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MICHAEL J. KLINGENSMITH, Publisher and CEO
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Probation system is in need of reform

A felony drug possession conviction might lead to a sentence of three years' probation in Hennepin County. Cross the river into Ramsey County, and the same conviction might bring five years of probationary supervision. And if you're found guilty of a similar offense in some Greater Minnesota counties, the time in the system could be seven years or more.

Granted, different situations might call for different sentences. However, when cases are roughly equal, there shouldn't be such wide disparities between the required time under supervision. Probation terms should be fair, and the criminal justice system should use resources to help ex-offenders successfully reintegrate into society.

Those are among the reasons to support proposed changes being considered by the Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission (MSGC).

Commission is wisely considering capping post-release supervision in state.

The 11-member commission recently held a public hearing on a plan to cap felony probation at five years. If approved by the commission and not overruled by the Legislature, the guidelines would apply to all felons, except those convicted of homicide or sex offenses.

The reforms should be adopted, in part, because lengthy probations for lesser felonies take probation officer time and attention that should be focused on those most likely to reoffend. University of Minnesota experts testified that felons are most likely to reoffend in the first few years — and that very few commit new crimes after five years under supervision.

In addition, longer terms create barriers for ex-offenders who are trying to reintegrate into their communities. Even if they have followed the rules for several years, continuing under supervision can prevent them from finding housing or employment.

According to a 2019 Council of State Governments Justice Center study, on any given day in Minnesota, 3,054 people are incarcerated as a result of a supervision violation. That costs the state \$125 million a year — and that doesn't include the local county and city costs for jailing probation violators. Capping probation sentences would reduce the number of people on probation and save taxpayer dollars.

Commissioners won't vote on the proposed changes until Jan. 9, when they submit their annual report to the Legislature. Unless state lawmakers overrule the MSGC, the new guidelines would take effect in August.

Should the Legislature intervene and further debate the issue, the plan could earn some bipartisan support. And though there has been some Republican and commissioner opposition to the change, both Republican and DFL lawmakers have suggested similar reforms in the past.

Earlier this year, Minnesota's DFL Gov. Tim Walz joined Republican Missouri Gov. Mike Parson in co-writing a commentary for *Time* magazine calling for changes in probation guidelines. And Minnesota Department of Corrections Commissioner Paul Schnell (who is also an MSGC commissioner), made a strong case for capping probation in a *Star Tribune* commentary.

"Yes, the [commission] could wait to see what the Legislature does or spend another year studying the issue, but at what cost?" he wrote. "The short answer: inexplicably long, wasteful, ineffective probation terms that vary depending upon your judicial district. In other words: justice by geography. It's hard to explain the differences when similarly situated people (same offense and background) do not receive similar treatment."