



November 19, 2025

MN Sentencing Guidelines Commission  
658 Cedar St., Suite G-58  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for Comprehensive Sentencing Guidelines Redesign

Dear Sentencing Guidelines Commissioners,

We are writing to express *strong support* for the complete package of proposed changes resulting from the Commission's comprehensive review. We are faculty in Sociology at the University of Minnesota with collective research expertise in corrections, sentencing, policing, and bail reform, including years of collaborative research with Minnesota stakeholders. We are excited to see the Commission undertake this new review of the guidelines and support the thoughtful, evidence-based reforms for improving Minnesota's sentencing system.

We support this package because:

- It's *grounded in evidence*. This review, supported by research from the Robina Institute at the University of Minnesota, including our colleague Professor Christopher Uggen, has identified several areas where the sentencing system can be improved to better align with research on recidivism and public safety, including changing the calculation for criminal history scores (Robina Institute, 2025).
- It maintains *Minnesota's leadership* in sentencing. Since 1980, Minnesota has been a national leader in structured sentencing as well as more judicious use of imprisonment resources. These efforts ensure we continue that legacy while learning from four decades of experience.
- It promotes both *fairness and justice*. The package includes changes that reduce unnecessary sanctions for old offenses and juvenile conduct. This balanced approach serves justice better than the current system.
- It *simplifies complex rules*. Several proposals eliminate unnecessarily complicated rules that create confusion and errors, making the system more transparent and understandable for practitioners and the public.
- It promotes *improved public safety*. Fair, balanced, and proportionate sentencing benefits public safety by allowing people to give back to their communities while also being held accountable for their actions.

Our collective decades of research all support the conviction that the U.S. can and should have a more transparent, fair, and proportionate system of sentencing. This proposal would move Minnesota in the right direction to continue to be a national leader.

Thank you for your commitment to evidence-based sentencing policy and for seeking public input on these important changes.

Sincerely,

*Michelle Phelps*, Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota

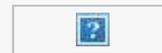
*Josh Page*, Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota

*Michael Walker*, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025 3:55:34 PM

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**Formstack Submission For: [Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us](#)**

Submitted at 11/19/25 3:55 PM

<b>Name:</b>	Mark Gross
<b>Email:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Phone:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>I am a(n)::</b>	Other
<b>I am a(n) other::</b>	concerned citizen
<b>Short description of your</b>	I'd love to know why Mohamed Aydarus Salad only had to serve a year for the reckless driving that injured 17-year-old Lauren Olson. After reading about his numerous other convictions for careless driving and inattentive driving and cited nine times for driving while his license was either suspended or revoked, I'm not happy that he didn't get more jail time. This guy thinks our laws are a joke.

**question or  
the reason  
you are  
contacting  
us today.:**

Going 96 mph on Highway 7 is extremely dangerous. I see drivers going too fast on it daily (although none as fast as 96 mph) and the only way to fix it is to hold those accountable. Please let me know what I, as a concerned citizen, can do to help. I think it has gotten to the point of needing cameras on some roads that can catch and punish the worst offenders.

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**Date:** Wednesday, November 19, 2025 5:50:17 PM

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Submitted at 11/19/25 5:50 PM

<b>Name:</b>	Mary Jo Brouillard
<b>Email:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Phone:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>I am a(n)::</b>	Public
<b>I am a(n) other::</b>	
<b>Short description of your question or the reason you are contacting us today.:</b>	I am writing to voice my opinion on the current sentencing guidelines. I feel they are way too easy on the offender. I would like to see longer sentences given with education and support given in the prison. There are way too many who re-offend. MaryJBrouillard

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Sentencing guidelines  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 2:58:51 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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You don't often get email from shawn.larsen@morrisoncountymn.gov. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Good afternoon,

Below are some bullet points reading the reducing of sentencing guidelines:

- Shortening the felony look-back period from 15 to 10 years obviously removes part of the offender's criminal history, even if the history demonstrates a pattern of repeated offending.
- When the court system stops recognizing older but still relevant convictions, it underestimates the risk and produces sentences that don't match the offenders actual threat level to the communities that they live in.
- Reducing the sentence points for repeat offenders means that these individuals return to their communities sooner, increasing the burden on law enforcement, while threatening community safety.
- Eliminating juvenile adjudication points creates a dangerous illusion that the offender is low risk, when in fact the opposite is true.
- Prior convictions are meant to deter future offending. When the system signals that older crimes or juvenile crimes don't count anymore, that deterrent collapses.
- Law enforcement, victims, and vulnerable communities are the ones who feel the consequences when repeat offenders receive short sentences and reoffend quickly.
- When the public sees serious repeat offenders receiving sentences that appear disproportionate to their histories, confidence in the court's declines.

Sentencing needs to be fair and fairness needs to apply to the victims, communities and future potential victims. Public safety is not served when we minimize patterns of behavior that clearly predict future violence or chronic offending. Thank you for your time-please reach out if you need any clarification or anything further.

Respectfully,



**MORRISON COUNTY**

*Sheriff's Office*  
**Shawn Larsen**  
SHERIFF  
BADGE #100

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us  
**Date:** Thursday, November 20, 2025 10:09:09 PM

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## Formstack Submission For: [Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us](#)

Submitted at 11/20/25 10:09 PM

<b>Name:</b>	Bradley Hunnel
<b>Email:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Phone:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>I am a(n)::</b>	Public
<b>I am a(n) other::</b>	
<b>Short description of your question or the reason you are contacting us today.:</b>	I think every care should be taken to avoid locking people up who don't need to be, justice should be about correction not punishment.

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Guidelines, Sentencing \(MSGC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us  
**Date:** Sunday, November 23, 2025 10:39:31 AM

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**Formstack Submission For: [Sentencing Guidelines: Contact Us](#)**

Submitted at 11/23/25 10:39 AM

<b>Name:</b>	Patrick Servais
<b>Email:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Phone:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>I am a(n)::</b>	Other
<b>I am a(n) other::</b>	MN resident
<b>Short description of your question or the reason you are contacting us today.:</b>	Why are we seeing more and more examples of criminals who kill or severely harm others receiving extremely light sentences? In addition, in Minnesota, why are those convicted only serve 2/3 of their sentence in prison?

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## MINNESOTA CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

DEDICATED TO THE IDEALS OF PROFESSIONAL POLICING

November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

### Public Comment Regarding Proposed Amendments to Sentencing Guidelines

To Whom it may concern:

On behalf of approximately 325 police chiefs and an additional 150 command staff members from police departments across Minnesota, the Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Proposed Amendments to the Sentencing Guidelines.

The MCPA **supports** the provisions outlined on Page 2, Paragraph B of the Notice of Hearing dated October 20, 2025. Specifically, we agree with the proposed adjustments to offense severity levels for the following crimes:

- Assault in the 2nd Degree
- Criminal Vehicular Operation
- Assault in the 3rd Degree / Domestic Strangulation
- Assault in the 4th Degree
- Criminal Vehicular Homicide
- Assault in the 1st Degree

We believe these changes appropriately reflect the seriousness of these offenses and better align sentencing with the harm inflicted on victims and communities.

However, the MCPA **does not support** other proposed changes, including:

- Reducing the decay period for prior felonies
- Converting custody status at the time of offense into a durational modifier
- Eliminating juvenile adjudications from criminal history calculations

Over the past several years, the MCPA has worked collaboratively with key stakeholders, legislators, and community partners to proactively address recidivism and ensure meaningful accountability for criminal behavior. While we appreciate the effort to modernize sentencing guidelines, we are concerned that these particular changes to criminal history calculations are **not victim-centered** and would ultimately **shorten**



**sentences for serious and repeat offenders.** Such changes risk undermining the progress we have made in promoting public safety, reducing violent crime, and building community trust.

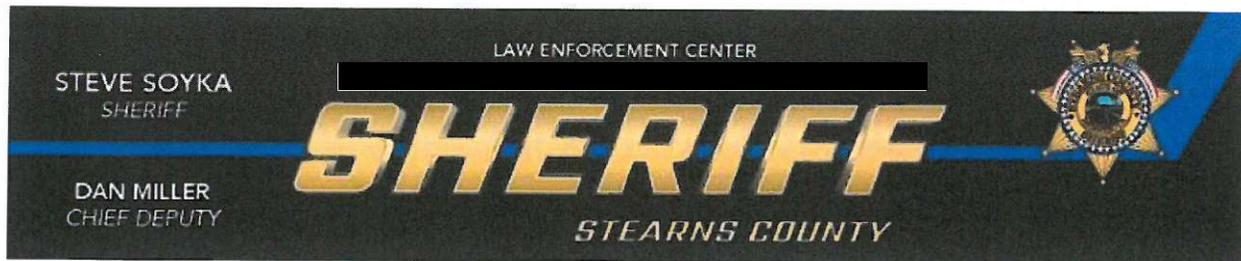
We welcome continued dialogue on these critical issues and remain committed to working with the Sentencing Guidelines Commission and other partners to advance balanced, evidence-informed policies that protect victims, hold offenders accountable, and strengthen public safety across Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Potts". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeff Potts  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association



November 25, 2025

To: Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission  
From: Sheriff Steve Soyka, Stearns County Sheriff's Office  
RE: MN Sentencing Guidelines Meeting, November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

To Whom It May Concern,

I am aware that a meeting of the Commission occurred on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, regarding some potential changes to reducing presumptive sentences and to reduce points toward juvenile delinquency. I am submitting these comments per the rules of November 25<sup>th</sup> to submit public comments.

As the Chief Law Enforcement Officer of Stearns County, I am tasked with public safety of all individuals within the county. As such I do not agree with the proposed item of reducing the "look back" period from 15 to 10 years. This has the potential to allow violent criminals to be released early and sets a precedent that a felony is not as serious as it should be. To turn those convicted of a crime back into the public is a dis-service to the community and certainly to the victims of their crimes. Further, reducing the points for crimes committed allows for a reduction in presumptive sentences that are important for consistency in the doling out of justice and for the overall good of the community.

In addition, no longer considering juvenile delinquency adjudications toward points could affect juveniles that are already career criminals before they turn 18 and would exclude those points from being counted in adult court. This hampers the criminal justice system and further puts the public in jeopardy of a "career criminal" walking the streets because they were not properly dealt with as a juvenile in the criminal justice system. Many stories from across the country have proven what happens when people are let go repeatedly. Let's not make it easier for that to happen in Minnesota.

Please do not consider any of these changes to the sentencing guidelines. This appears to be an attempt to reduce prison population numbers in an effort to support the DOC in the closing of Stillwater. We were assured they had bed space for all inmates affected by that closing; however, this looks like a veiled attempt to hide the fact that the DOC is not prepared for this closing, and the solution is to let inmates go early. Please keep Minnesota safe!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Steve Soyka", is located below the text of the letter.

Sheriff Steve Soyka  
Stearns County Sheriff's Office

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus*

*Robina Institute of Criminal Law  
and Criminal Justice  
University of Minnesota Law  
School*

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
<http://www.law.umn.edu/>

November 25, 2025

Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines Commission  
658 Cedar Street, Suite G-58  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Commission Members:

Our research team has supported the Commission's comprehensive review by examining trends in presumptive prison recommendations, assessing the performance of the criminal history score (CHS), and testing options to better align sentencing policy with public safety and proportionality. As researchers and legal scholars with deep expertise in sentencing, recidivism, and guidelines design we have produced peer-reviewed studies and statewide assessments in these areas. With that context, we write to endorse the Commission's Consensus Policy Package and highlight the research that supports several of the key proposed changes below.

First, shortening the felony look-back ("decay") period from 15 to 10 years reflects what desistance research has found for decades: after roughly seven to ten crime-free years (offense-specific), a person's risk of new arrest converges toward that of same-aged people with no record.<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> Very old convictions add little predictive value. In addition, prolonged look-back periods primarily affect older defendants with decades-old convictions — a group that, consistent with the age-crime curve, tends to be lower risk.<sup>14</sup> Minnesota-specific analyses also show that growth in criminal history points, rather than offense severity, has been a central driver of the long-run increase in presumptive prison recommendations.<sup>2</sup> As our state's felony defendants have gotten older - reflecting statewide aging and cohort shifts in criminal involvement – they arrive with more

prior felonies, which mechanically pushes the CHS upward.<sup>2</sup> Calibrating look-back periods to better reflect a person’s current risk would help keep CHS growth in check without sacrificing the predictive value of prior record.

For the same reason, shortening the misdemeanor/gross-misdemeanor decay period to seven years is consistent with the research. After sustained time crime-free, older low-level priors contribute little additional information to a person’s risk of reoffending.<sup>5 6</sup> In sum, these policy changes serve the state by reducing incarceration and supervision costs for those who pose the least risk to public safety, thereby reserving prison beds for those who have committed more serious and more recent offenses.

Second, the proposal to add a narrowly defined “true first-offender” mitigating factor—limited to people with no prior criminal convictions or stays of adjudication of any kind—also tracks with the evidence. National and Minnesota studies show that individuals with no significant prior criminal justice contact reoffend at markedly lower rates than otherwise similarly situated defendants - including those with the same CHS. Reserving a sentencing mitigator for a clearly defined first-time offender group aligns sentences with risk and helps the lowest-risk defendants avoid harsh penalties that can derail jobs, housing, and family stability.<sup>3 7 8</sup>

Third, eliminating juvenile-adjudication points from the criminal history score is supported by developmental science and by the evaluation of our state’s CHS. Most justice-involved youth desist as they mature<sup>10</sup>, and juvenile records have limited value for predicting adult behavior.<sup>9</sup> An evaluation of Minnesota’s CHS found that counting juvenile convictions did not improve recidivism prediction and increased racial disparity in incarceration.<sup>3</sup> In short, this change prevents old juvenile records—which don’t predict adult reoffending—from pushing someone into prison or into a harsher, out-of-proportion sentence. Under the proposed change, extended jurisdiction juvenile (EJJ) and adult certified convictions would still add a point to the CHS, thus preserving the most serious cases.

Fourth, converting custody status from a CHS component to a durational (rather than dispositional) modifier is likewise evidence-consistent. A large body of research finds that, for otherwise similar people, incarceration generally does not reduce reoffending more than community sanctions.<sup>11 12</sup> Analysis also found that the Minnesota custody-status point added minimal predictive power while increasing the share of cases recommended to prison and contributing to racial disparity in incarceration.<sup>3</sup> This policy change would prevent custody status

from automatically pushing persons across the dispositional line and into prison, while still responding to the breach of supervision with a proportionate increase in sentence length.

Finally, the proposed clarification that CHS serves both public safety and sentencing proportionality - rather than repunishing old crimes - is in line with contemporary guidance and the empirical evidence on the primary usefulness of prior record. Prior convictions are informative of recidivism risk,<sup>13 3</sup> and modern sentencing principles recognize a limited, time-diminishing role for prior record in blameworthiness so that criminal history supports, rather than overwhelms, proportionality in sentencing.<sup>14</sup>

We hope this summary is helpful as you prepare for your final vote. We appreciate the Commission's careful work, and we're available to answer questions or provide any additional analysis you may need.

Respectfully submitted,



**Kevin Reitz**, James Annenberg La Vea Professor of Law; Faculty Director, Robina Institute, University of Minnesota Law School



**Chris Uggen**, Regents Professor & Distinguished McKnight University Professor, Sociology/Law/Public Affairs, University of Minnesota



**Julia Laskorunsky**, Research Director, Robina Institute, University of Minnesota Law School



**Aaron Sojourner**, Senior Researcher, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research

## Notes and References

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