



April 27, 2021

Governor Tim Walz
Speaker Melissa Hortman
House Majority Leader Ryan Winkler
House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt
Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka
Senate Minority Leader Susan Kent

Governor Walz and Legislative Leaders,

The number one goal of the POCI Caucus of Minnesota is to end the persistent disparities that exist in our State and pass legislation that will protect and secure the wellbeing of all people, regardless of their ethnic background or zip code.

We also know from our experience as Legislators who often represent the voice of diverse constituencies, that our communities of color and Indigenous communities have historically been neglected and left out of decisions and negotiations that are too often completed under pressure of time and behind closed doors without our voices.

As such we require that conferees assigned on April 26 to negotiate the Judiciary Omnibus bill begin their work immediately, that conferees be required to complete their work by the end of the week completing the final bill that will be sent to the floor of both Houses by Monday, May 3rd, and be subsequently sent to the Governor for his signature or veto.

As laid out in a letter from Majority Leader Gazelka and Speaker Hortman the omnibus bill is a Senate file and Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Limmer will be responsible for calling the first meeting of the conference committee. We expect him to do so as soon as possible so this important work is not delayed – there isn't time left in session for delays or political games if we want this bill passed and kept out of end of session negotiations.

The House Public Safety and Judiciary Finance Omnibus and the Senate Judiciary Omnibus bills include common sense, reasonable policy that will strengthen safety for everyone, including BIPOC communities.

We believe that this bill should be negotiated independently ahead of other bills, and not used as a bargaining chip in the final deals of the session as we have witnessed in the past.

While the Judiciary budget is one of the largest areas in the State's budget, the target for judiciary is often a smaller target compared to targets of other divisions. Assigning a target to Judiciary early is vital - not only appropriate at this time, but urgent and necessary.

The POCI Caucus recognizes that one of the most important and challenging tasks in this time of our state is building consensus on policy items, which makes it even more necessary that this work starts immediately and be tied to a deadline in order to keep conferees focused and on the task at hand.

POCI Caucus members should never be put in a position to have to accept unfair exchanges that ignore or harm our communities. For this reason, we are demanding that the work on this area of the budget start immediately and be completed early to avoid using the lives of our community members as bargaining chips in final legislative negotiations.

Our POCI Caucus members recognize that as part of this policy work, criminal justice and policing reform must be the top priority, and that these reforms are only part of the work that must be done to address racial and economic inequalities in Minnesota.

This is why, in addition to our requirement to begin and finish the work of passing a Judiciary Omnibus bill early and independently, we will continue our fight and work together to demand that the Governor, the Speaker, the Majority Leader, and all legislators work hard to accomplish what they promised to Minnesotans - to fight for all Minnesotans and end the persistent disparities that exist across our state of Minnesota.

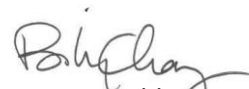
We eagerly wait for your response as well as the calling of the first conference committee meeting by Chair Limmer and an agreement on a budget target and deadline for the Public Safety and Judiciary Finance budget bill.

Signed,


Senator Patricia Torres Ray


Senator Fong Hawj


Senator Nick Frenzt


Senator Bobby Joe Champion


Senator Mary Kunesh


Senator Chuck Wiger


Senator Omar Fateh

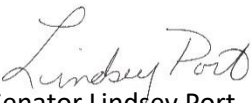

Senator Kari Dziedzic


Senator Erin Murphy

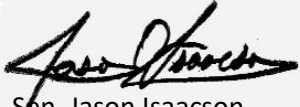

Senator Melisa Franzen


Senator Jennifer McEwen


Senator Steve Cwodzinski


Senator Lindsey Port


Senator John Marty


Sen. Jason Isaacson


Senator Chris Eaton


Senator Melisa Wiklund


Sen. Scott Dibble


Senator Matt Klein


Sen. Ann Johnson Stewart


Sen. Aric Putnam