

Good morning Madam Chair and members of the committee.

My name is Valerie Dorff and I am a field services agent out of the Moorhead Department of Corrections office. I have been employed as a probation and parole agent for 28 years. I have worked for the State of Minnesota for 25 years. I'm here to testify in support of House File 167.

The Moorhead adult felony office has 9 agents with caseloads ranging from 70 to 240 offenders per agent. Caseloads are divided by risk level, with higher risk offenders receiving more intensive supervision. In addition to supervising offenders in the community, DOC agents are also responsible for writing pre-sentence investigation reports, or PSI's for all felony cases and some misdemeanor cases.

A PSI begins with an interview of the offender which follows conviction, but is before sentencing. This interview typically lasts between one and two hours. Information gathered from the offender is written into a comprehensive, social history type of report. The report includes many sections, such as personal history, education, employment, financial information, accommodations, leisure activities, chemical use, and physical and mental health. The PSI includes information about the offense, such as the Defendant's version, the official version, and the plea agreement, if there is one. The PSI may incorporate other assessments such as a substance use evaluation, a mental health assessment, or a psychosexual assessment. Probation agents reach out to victims and include their thoughts and concerns regarding the impact of the offense. Lastly, the PSI contains a final assessment, a review of Minnesota Sentencing Guidelines, and a recommendation for either a probationary sentence or a commitment to prison. A PSI is often 6 to 10 pages long and takes an average of 4-6 hours to write, depending on the complexity of the case. Our goal is to use DOC resources as effectively as possible. Spending scarce resources to write PSI's on low level felony offenses, only serves to reduce time spent with offenders to ensure they have everything they need to successfully reintegrate back into the community.

Adding discretionary language to the PSI statute won't fix the problem of truly overwhelming caseloads; only more agents will do that. But after years of denied requests for additional agents in field services, our hope is that this bill will allow agents more time to actually work with offenders to effect the change we all wish to see. Please support House File 167.