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Law and Justice Interim Committee

67th Montana Legislature

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September 30, 2022

Dear State and Local Criminal Justice System Stakeholders,

The Law and Justice Interim Committee spent the past year studying the state of criminal justice system data. What we've learned prompted us to request legislation for the 2023 Legislature and to encourage you to participate in the recently launched Justice Counts Initiative. This national initiative between the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs' Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center, and 21 national partners seeks to develop and implement metrics for criminal justice system agencies. The end goal is to provide policymakers with more timely and actionable data.

That goal coincides with what we've discovered during our interim study of justice system data in Montana: improved state and local criminal justice system data collection, sharing, and integration ultimately drives public safety by informing funding, policy, caseload, and staffing decisions, as well as how policy decisions can affect prison and supervision populations and recidivism. We also know that the seemingly separate pieces of the state and local criminal justice system are intertwined. The state cannot make effective changes without the support of its local partners.

There are several ways in which you can participate in Justice Counts and begin to improve criminal justice system data:

- Review the stakeholder-created metrics for data and take the Justice Counts Self-Assessment at www.justicecounts.csgjusticecenter.org;
- Join with other Montana stakeholders to sign a joint letter (see the attached example) committing to the metrics and requesting to receive technical assistance; or
- Encourage the Governor to issue an Executive Order committing to the metrics.

Committing Montana to collecting the Justice Counts metrics is one step you can take to ensure that public safety decisions in our state are driven by data.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Esp".

Sen. John Esp, LJIC Senior Senator

Attachment: Sample of a joint letter from stakeholders

CC:

Governor Greg Gianforte

Attorney General Austin Knudsen

Chief Justice Mike McGrath

Brian Gootkin, Director, Department of Corrections

Brett Schandelson, Director, Office of State Public Defender

Steve Hurd, Chair, Board of Pardons and Parole

Sheriff Jesse Slaughter, Chair, Public Safety Officer Standards and Training Council

Sheriff Leo Dutton, Chair, Board of Crime Control

Nanette Gilbertson, representative of Montana County Attorneys Association and Montana Sheriffs and
Peace Officers Association

Erin McGowan, representative of Montana Community Corrections Association