



MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Sarah Walker, 180 Degrees, Inc., 612.813.5017, sarahw@180degrees.org

Supporters of Justice Reform Gather for Second Chance Day on the Hill

Hundreds of ex-offenders, their families and supporters of justice reform came together today at the State Capitol Rotunda to highlight the importance of second chances. The effort is being led by the Minnesota Second Chance Coalition, a non-partisan consortium of justice advocates and nonprofit leaders working to raise statewide and national awareness regarding the barriers facing individuals with criminal records. These barriers affect the social, civic and economic stability of families and entire communities. According to the Pew Center on the States, one out of every 26 Minnesotans is currently incarcerated, or on probation or parole, accounting for over 152,000 state residents and \$460 million dollars spent on state corrections work. The Second Chance Coalition believes that kind of investment in people and dollars should be spent thoughtfully, holding people responsible for their actions while offering them a way to move ahead with their lives once punishment ends.

Speakers for the rally included: St. Paul City Attorney John Choi; St. Paul Police Department Commander Todd Axtell; Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek; National Alliance for the Mentally Ill Executive Director Sue Abderholden; and Catholic Bishop Lee A. Piché. Brockton Hunter, Legislative Chair of the Minnesota Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, spoke about the particular importance of second chances in the criminal justice system for combat veterans.

St Paul Police Commander Todd Axtell summed up the spirit of the day well when he said, "As a young officer with a limited understanding, I never would have guessed that I would be standing in the Capitol promoting second chances for ex-offenders. Sometimes our antiquated beliefs relating to how we should serve our community get in the way of what we know to be the recipe for providing the safest environments for all of us. We have come a long way, but have a long way to go to ensure we all see the many benefits of encouraging "second chances" for our community members who have made mistakes, paid the price, and now want to become productive members of our communities."

Among other legislation being proposed, Senator Mee Moua and Representative John Lesch are introducing a “Juvenile Records Reform Act”, a bill that will enhance the ability of young adults with a juvenile record to reach their full potential as adults. While most people believe that juvenile records are and should be private and very limited in their long-term impact, current law creates a number of situations where juvenile records are public and/or limit the ability of the child to be employed in certain fields for many years or even the rest of their lives.

To learn more about the Coalition and its members, visit its website at www.mnsecondchancecoalition.org; follow them on Facebook by joining the “MN Second Chance Coalition” group.