



Senator Michael E. Dembrow
Senate District 23

March 29, 2023

Dear Chair Kropf and House Judiciary Committee Members:

I'm writing in support of HB 2890, a bill that you heard yesterday morning. It creates some very important direction to the Department of Corrections to make much-needed improvements to our system of health care for adults in custody.

Colleagues, I was honored last year to serve as a member of the Task Force on Corrections Medical Care, alongside Representative Dexter, the lead sponsor of this bill. The task force was co-chaired by an "outside" physician and a DOC healthcare administrator. Over a series of meetings we came to understand both the good intentions of our current (underfunded and overburdened) system and its hard-working employees and the many challenges that they face.

SB 2890 is a first step to implementing some of the recommendations of that task force. It lays out our expectations for the level of healthcare services—including mental health and substance abuse disorder treatment—that we expect to be provided adults in custody who need them.. It clarifies the role of the newly-created Corrections Ombudsman position, which we came to see as potentially playing a critical role. It includes crucial reporting requirements that will allow legislators to understand the progress that has been made and the work that is still needed.

I want to thank you for considering this important bill, and I also want to thank Representative Dexter for introducing it and continuing to advocate for it with great passion. It's a valuable next step.

Sincerely,

Michael E. Dembrow
Senator, SD 23

