

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

April 6, 2026

Dear Mayors and Police Chiefs:

On behalf of the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners, I acknowledge receipt of correspondence received on March 26, 2026, from Mayors and Police Chiefs representing 30 jurisdictions within Hennepin County. The letter referenced comments made during the Administration, Operations, and Budget Committee meeting held on March 24, 2026, highlighted important examples of how the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) supports cities and provides public safety services, and encouraged the County Board to fund the HCSO appropriately.

Thank you for your advocacy. As you know, budgets are statements of priorities. The County Board's funding of the HCSO over the past several years demonstrates the Board's commitment to the HCSO and public safety in Hennepin County.

It is important to clarify that the County Board has *not* considered or voted on any action to reduce the HCSO budget. The County Board has materially increased its support of the HCSO over the past several years. The HCSO adopted budget for 2026 is \$182,451,997. This is an *increase* of \$13.2 million over the adopted budget for 2025. In the last four years (2023-2026), the HCSO budget has grown from \$141.2M to \$182.5M (\$41.2M or 29.2% increase). The most significant funding source for this increase is property taxes levied by the County. In the last four years, property tax revenue budgeted for the HCSO budget has grown from \$122.5M to \$162.6M (\$40.2M or 33% increase). The HCSO's property tax revenue increase has outpaced the County's overall increase in the levy. Over the last four years, the HCSO's use of property tax revenues has increased 33% while the County's overall levy has increased 23%. In addition to property tax increases, the County also dedicated its entire allocation of state Public Safety Aid (\$14.1 million) to the HCSO even though there can be other uses for this aid.

Additionally, the referenced comments occurred during an item that reconciled the HCSO's 2025 budget variance (not 2026), which was unanimously approved. Despite the continued increases in approved budgets, the HCSO has exceeded its budget for multiple years. At the March 24 meeting, the Board passed a resolution to amend the HCSO's 2025 budget because the HCSO overspent its 2025 budget by an

estimated \$15.4 million or approximately 9%¹ (For reference, a 1% increase in the county's property tax levy equates to \$11.3 million).

Last, it is important to highlight compounding pressures on the 2026 and 2027 County budgets, which mandate a more transparent financial process on behalf of residents and property taxpayers. For this reason, the County Board has pursued a number of strategies to ensure the public is aware of upcoming financial need and performance (*across the organization*) much sooner than in previous years. As you know, resident feedback regarding property tax pressures continues to grow. The Hennepin County Board will continue to work with the HCSO to ensure that it has adequate resources to meet the public safety needs of Hennepin County residents and that the HCSO acts within its authorized budget.

In closing, thank you for your letter and your support for HCSO. I agree that public safety in Hennepin County is a shared responsibility among all jurisdictions, and I am grateful for your partnership. Specifically, I acknowledge the important services and examples you provided in the letter, which are implemented via the State, Minnesota's court system, the County, and cities within Hennepin County. I intend to dig deeper into the examples to ensure I am fully appreciating your feedback, and I remain very open to meeting as you see fit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Irene Fernando". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Irene" and last name "Fernando" clearly distinguishable.

Irene Fernando
Hennepin County Board, Chair

¹ In 2024, the HCSO overspent by \$8.6 million; in 2023 it was \$1.1 million; and in 2022 it was \$425 thousand.