



October 23, 2023

Honorable Mayor Cole and Members of Billings City Council,

The Billings Chamber of Commerce lends its support to Councilwoman Owen's initiative requesting staff to provide recommendations for the creation of a Family Violence Investigation Unit within the Billings Police Department. Public safety continues to be a priority for our members, and we support ongoing examination of our public safety and justice system to ensure it operates as effectively as possible.

We were very encouraged by, and supportive of, the public safety recommendations provided in the Center for Public Safety Management (CPSM) reports that offered suggestions to make our police and fire departments more effective. Thanks to the CPSM recommendations, the Domestic Violence Investigator position was moved from the Professional Standards Division and into the Investigations Division, ensuring appropriate oversight and alignment of resources, responsibilities, and goals.

Another recommendation in the BPD CPSM report (#20) was to assign, "detectives to specialized units such as crimes against persons, property crimes, or family crimes. While we understand there is an informal system of investigation specialization within the Division, we believe it is worth further investigation to determine how a specialized Family Violence Investigation Unit could operate within the BPD.

You are all aware how prevalent domestic violence is in Billings, accounting for a significant portion of violent crime offenses. More effectively addressing domestic/family violence would build on the positive news delivered by Chief St. John earlier this summer that violent and property crime had double-digit declines over the last two years.

Lastly, as community conversations about the possibility of a Family Justice Center continue, we believe a Family Violence Investigation Unit could provide effective synergies, producing greater impact in addressing family violence in Billings.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel J. Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "D" and "B".

DANIEL J. BROOKS
Business Advocacy Director
Billings Chamber of Commerce