

*This opinion is nonprecedential except as provided by
Minn. R. Civ. App. P. 136.01, subd. 1(c).*

**STATE OF MINNESOTA
IN COURT OF APPEALS
A25-2034**

Dajuan M Walker,
Appellant,

vs.

Paul Schnell, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Corrections,
Respondent,

John Doe, Challenge Incarceration Program Director/Designee,
Defendant.

**Filed June 22, 2026
Affirmed
Connolly, Judge**

Ramsey County District Court
File No. 62-CV-25-2896

Dajuan M. Walker, Lino Lakes, Minnesota (pro se appellant)

Keith Ellison, Attorney General, Ed Stockmeyer, Assistant Attorney General, St. Paul,
Minnesota (for respondents)

Considered and decided by Worke, Presiding Judge; Connolly, Judge; and Ede,
Judge.

NONPRECEDENTIAL OPINION

CONNOLLY, Judge

Appellant, an inmate who applied unsuccessfully to the Challenge Incarceration
Program (CIP), brought this action against respondents, personnel associated with the CIP,

seeking an order compelling them to admit him to the CIP. The district court granted respondents' motion to dismiss appellant's claims. We affirm.

FACTS

In 2018, appellant Dajuan M. Walker was convicted of assault and robbery in Georgia and was incarcerated for about a year. He is now committed to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC). In November 2024, appellant applied for admission to the CIP. In March 2025, he learned that he had been denied admission. He filed a civil complaint against respondents Commissioner Paul Schnell and a John Doe, whom appellant identified as the CIP "Director/Designee." He subsequently filed an amended complaint that added a defendant, respondent Shannon Reimann, described as "CIP Warden." Respondents moved to dismiss appellant's amended complaint.

After a video hearing, the district court granted respondents' motion, relying in part on Minn. Stat. § 244.17, subd. 3 (2024) (providing that those who have been convicted of various crimes, among them assault and robbery, are ineligible for the CIP). Appellant challenges the denial.

DECISION

"[S]tatutory construction is a question of law, which we review de novo." *Lee v. Lee*, 775 N.W.2d 631, 637 (Minn. 2009). "The application of statutes . . . to undisputed facts is a legal conclusion and is reviewed de novo." *City of Morris v. Sax Invs., Inc.*, 749 N.W.2d 1, 5 (Minn. 2008).

The following offenders are not eligible to be placed in [CIP]:

- (1) offenders who are committed to the commissioner's custody following a conviction for murder, manslaughter, criminal sexual conduct, assault, or any other offense involving death or intentional personal injury;
- (2) offenders who were convicted within the preceding ten years of an offense described in clause (1) *and* were committed to the custody of the commissioner.

Minn. Stat. § 244.17, subd. 3 (emphasis added). It is undisputed that appellant (1) was convicted within the last ten years of assault and robbery, and (2) is now committed to the custody of the commissioner.

Appellant states that the word “and,” emphasized in the quotation above, denotes causation so that, because his Georgia assault and robbery convictions were not the cause of his being committed to his present Minnesota DOC custody, they are irrelevant to his CIP eligibility. The district court rejected this argument: “In reading the statute as a whole, it is clear that the legislature’s purpose was to exclude certain persons who have committed serious, violent offenses from CIP.” We agree.

“The goal of statutory interpretation is to ascertain and effectuate the intent of the [l]egislature.” *State v. Moore*, 10 N.W.3d 676, 680 (Minn. 2024). “In ascertaining the intention of the legislature,” courts may be guided by the presumption that “the legislature does not intend a result that is absurd.” Minn. Stat. § 645.17 (2024). The district court did not err in concluding that Minn. Stat. § 244.17, subd. 3, applies to render appellant ineligible for the CIP.

In appellant’s memorandum opposing respondents’ motion to dismiss, he added words to the statute: “The plain language of § 244.17, subd. 3(2), reveals that the legislature

intended to disqualify CIP applicants who were convicted of an enumerated offense within the preceding 10 years and were committed to the Commissioner’s custody *as a consequence of said conviction.*” (Emphasis added.) But courts may not read words into the statute that are not present. *See In re Minn. Living Assistance, Inc.*, 934 N.W.2d 300, 305 (Minn. 2019) (rejecting an argument because it “would require us to read words into the statute that are not present.”); *see also Reimringer v. Anderson*, 960 N.W.2d 684, 688 (Minn. 2021) (noting that, in the context of a treble damages claim requiring proof of both unlawfulness and bad faith, “the word ‘and’ serves as a conjunctive link between two distinct elements in a statute or rule”).

The statute says “and”; it does not say “as a consequence” or “were therefore committed” or “because of this, were committed,” all of which, along with synonymous phrases, were available if the legislature had wanted to express causation instead of conjunction. One element of Minn. Stat. § 244.17, subd. 3(2), is that offenders were convicted of a listed offense within the last ten years, and the other element is that they were committed to the custody of the commissioner. There is no requirement that their current commitment to the custody of the commissioner resulted from their conviction of a listed offense in the last ten years.

Affirmed.