



Housing Justice Center
Dedicated to expanding
and preserving the supply
of affordable housing in
Minnesota and nationwide.

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April 5, 2022

Dear Chair Marquart and Committee Members:

Housing Justice Center is a nonprofit public interest advocacy and legal organization whose primary mission is to preserve and expand affordable housing for low-income individuals and families. Since December 2020, the Housing Justice Center has assisted thousands of Minnesotans statewide who were applying for emergency rental assistance. Housing Justice Center also served as a field partner for the statewide program RentHelpMN. Since the abrupt closure of RentHelpMN in January 2022, the Housing Justice Center has fielded calls from across the state from desperate Minnesotans who cannot find resources in their community to help pay for rent when an emergency occurs. We write in support of H.F. 3669, and urge additional funding for emergency rental assistance.

Emergency rental assistance is a necessary and under-funded tool required for housing stability. In Minnesota, it is estimated that over 268,000 households spend more than half of their monthly income on rent. When any other emergency happens, whether it is a flat tire on the way to work, or a parent forced to take a day off to stay home due to a COVID-19 exposure at their child's daycare, families quickly fall behind and become at risk of eviction. While a patchwork of local emergency rental assistance programs and local charities exist to help families pay rent when emergencies happen, those programs have historically been severely underfunded, and continue to be unable to meet the demand. And under many programs, families are only given support to cover part of the rental debt and are only allowed to apply once a year for aid. In many communities across Minnesota no emergency rental resources exist today to help a family who has fallen behind on rent.

The investment of \$25 million dollars to emergency rental assistance has a profound impact to families and communities. While an eviction stemming from the inability to pay rent can prevent a family from accessing housing of their choice for years to come, emergency rental assistance makes sure that local landlords are able to receive the money that they are entitled while the family financially stabilizes in their home. We have had callers that have been able to start businesses, grow their families, and begin new careers because they were able to get a little help in a desperate moment.

The fact that RentHelpMN distributed over 500 million dollars in aid in less than 11 months demonstrates the need is great for emergency rental assistance. The fact that Housing Justice Center still receives desperate calls daily from families behind on rent demonstrates that Minnesota still needs to invest in housing stability through emergency rental assistance programs.

Sincerely,

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