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The mission of the Twin Cities Medical Society is to connect, represent, and engage physicians in improving the practice of medicine, policy development and public health initiatives.

March 4th, 2021

Representative Jennifer Schultz, Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Via electronic delivery

Re: Support for H.F. 601 (Modifying Housing Support)

Chair Schultz, Vice Chair Bahner, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Twin Cities Medical Society in support of H.F. 601, the proposed bill to further support Minnesotans who are a part of the statewide Housing Support program. Twin Cities Medical Society (TCMS) is an organization that represents over 4,500 physicians and medical students living and working in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Our physician members are all too familiar with the disproportionate health risks and disparities that Minnesotans at risk of homelessness experience. The ongoing pandemic only serves to exacerbate these already significant risks. This makes important programs like Housing Support even more vital. TCMS and its members believe that housing is health, and that access to safe and stable housing is crucial in being able to address any other ongoing needs, including seeking medical treatment (including COVID-19 care), mental health treatment, and substance use support. Waiving the absence requirements so that Housing Support program recipients are not penalized for seeking care is a key part of H.F. 601 and is imperative to help Minnesotans maintain their housing.

Housing Support is a program that helps disrupt the cycle of homelessness in Minnesota and program recipients should be supported, and not penalized for being away from their housing due to seeking care. More than 50% of Housing Support program recipients are Black, Indigenous, and people of color¹. Housing, health and safety, and racial justice are issues that are intertwined and cannot be separated from each other. TCMS thanks you for considering this important bill and urges you to support it in your committee.

Thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Traxler", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Sarah Traxler, MD

President of the Twin Cities Medical Society

¹ Catholic Charities Twin Cities. (2021). Unsheltered in Minnesota.[Fact sheet].