



creating homeowners
building community

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nwhomepartners.org

Minnesota House of Representatives
Housing Finance and Policy Committee

April 6, 2026

Subject: Support for HF1879 to increase funding for Housing Education Counseling and Training

Dear Chair Igo, Chair Howard, and members of the committee:

On behalf of NeighborWorks Home Partners (NWHP), I am writing to express our strong support for HF1879, which increases funding for Housing Education Counseling and Training. NWHP is a Minnesota-based nonprofit dedicated to helping people buy, fix, and keep their homes by providing full-cycle, community-driven homeownership services that remove barriers for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households.

For more than 45 years, NWHP has served Minnesotan families through financial education, one-on-one prepurchase mortgage advising, homebuyer workshops, down payment assistance, home improvement assistance, post purchase advising, and foreclosure counseling. As a chartered NeighborWorks America HomeOwnership Center and a U.S. Treasury certified CDFI, we provide holistic support to families at every stage of the homeownership continuum. NWHP operates full-service locations in North Minneapolis and St. Paul's Frogtown neighborhood for in person services and virtual services that reach urban, suburban, and rural communities statewide. We serve our advising customers in English, Hmong, and Spanish.

The need for housing counseling in Minnesota is urgent. Minnesota has one of the widest racial homeownership gaps in the nation, with Black homeownership at just 26% compared to 77% for white households, and with disparities worsening rather than improving. These gaps stem from decades of disinvestment and systemic inequities, including redlining and exclusionary housing policies. Rising home prices, stagnant incomes, and limited affordable inventory are pushing homeownership further out of reach for LMI families. Nearly half of renters are cost burdened, and more than 75% of renter households in core Twin Cities neighborhoods earn below the area median income, putting these communities at increased risk of displacement. NWHP's services directly address these barriers by helping households build financial stability, access safe mortgage products, and sustain long-term homeownership. Without targeted



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interventions like housing education and counseling, these trends will continue to widen Minnesota's homeownership gap.

The benefits of homeownership extend beyond financial stability. For low-income families, owning a home can break the cycle of poverty by stabilizing housing costs, enabling tax savings, and building equity. Homeownership also contributes to positive social outcomes, including consistent schooling, stronger neighborhood ties, and increased civic engagement. Ultimately, successful homeownership is a cornerstone of regional economic stability. Carlos Cordero, a Hennepin County resident who received one-on-one counseling from NWHP before purchasing his home with Hennepin County down payment assistance, had the following to say about the impact NWHP had on his journey: *"It was something wonderful—something that has completely changed my life. As a migrant, I used to think I was limited to renting; I viewed buying an apartment as something very difficult to achieve. Little by little, things began to fall into place, and I was recommended this assistance; it helped me secure a more manageable monthly mortgage payment. I feel very at peace and happy in my apartment."*

HF1879 would allow organizations like NWHP to expand advising capacity, shorten wait times, increase multilingual and culturally specific services, and serve more households moving toward mortgage readiness and sustainable homeownership. Additional funding would directly translate into more families receiving one-on-one counseling, improved financial capability outcomes, and stronger protections against foreclosure and housing instability.

We urge your support for HF1879 and for continued investment in housing education and counseling programs that strengthen families, stabilize communities, and protect Minnesota's housing future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Peterson".

Jason Peterson
Chief Executive Officer
NeighborWorks Home Partners



April 7, 2026

RE: Support for HF 1879 to increase funding for Housing Education Counseling and Training
To: Chair and Members of the House of Representatives Housing Finance and Policy
Committee, Minnesota Legislature

Dear Chair Igo, Chair Howard, and Committee Members,

Homeownership Minnesota (HOM) is a statewide coalition of 17 organizations dedicated to the production and preservation of affordable homeownership and to preparing households for homeownership. We are writing to express HOM's support for **HF 1879** to provide increased funding for the statewide homeownership education, counseling, and training (HECAT) program.

We know that the HECAT program is an essential part of homeownership preparation and stability. HECAT provides critical education and support, ensuring that diverse first-time homebuyers are well-prepared for the process. It also opens doors to various down payment assistance options. The HECAT program supports the success of households in all phases of their housing journey. Specific features of the program include:

- **Flexible and low-barrier:** Homeownership counselors provide credit building, budgeting, and rental stabilization advice to increase financial wellness and preparedness of households.
- **Stabilizing:** The program includes foreclosure prevention counseling and group education as well as support in connecting to resources like down payment assistance and shared equity homeownership solutions for cost-burdened renters.
- **Accessible:** Advisors provide guidance on the home purchase process in Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and Oromo, with translation support for additional languages.
- **Unbiased and wide reach:** Nearly 30 housing counseling agencies statewide are trained to meet residents where they are and offer unbiased advice before buyers move on to work with lenders and realtors - which is especially helpful for first-time and first-gen buyers.

In short, this vital program ensures that all Minnesotans have access to unbiased and responsive counseling that stabilizes their housing. We encourage your support of HF 1879.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Jeru Gobeze'.

Jeru Gobeze, Steering Committee Member

Homeownership Minnesota (HOM) Coalition

jeru.gobeze@habitatminnesota.org

April 7, 2026

African Career, Education & Resource Inc. (ACER)

Testimony in Support of HF1879

Homeownership Education, Counseling, and Training Program

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of ACER (African Career, Education & Resource Inc.), I am writing to express strong support for HF1879, which appropriates funding for homeownership education, counseling, and training.

ACER works at the intersection of economic development, housing stability, and wealth-building for African and immigrant communities across Minnesota. Through our programming, we support first-time homebuyers, entrepreneurs, and families navigating complex financial and housing systems. We see firsthand the critical role that accessible, culturally responsive homeownership education plays in creating stable pathways to ownership.

We strongly support this investment in homeownership education and counseling. However, we urge the legislature to ensure that funded programs include **comprehensive, practical training that reflects the full spectrum of homeownership models**, including properties governed by Homeowners Associations (HOAs).

Too often, first-time homebuyers—particularly those from underserved communities—are encouraged to “review documents” without being equipped to understand:

- HOA bylaws and governance structures
- Fee obligations and special assessments
- Enforcement mechanisms and associated risks
- Long-term financial implications of HOA ownership

Without this knowledge, buyers may unknowingly enter into agreements that place them at higher risk of financial strain or even foreclosure.

HF1879 presents an opportunity to strengthen outcomes by ensuring that education programs:

- Include clear, standardized training on HOA ownership
- Provide practical tools to interpret governing documents
- Deliver culturally and linguistically responsive education
- Address real-world risks and decision-making scenarios

ACER is also interested in partnering with the state to develop and deliver this training, leveraging our deep community relationships and experience providing technical assistance and financial education.

We've worked hand in hand with members of underserved communities to help them avoid foreclosure—supporting them in navigating housing courts and mediating with HOAs. We understand firsthand the financial and emotional impact this part of the system can have on families and communities.

Investing in homeownership education must go beyond access—it must ensure informed, sustainable ownership. This bill is a strong step forward, and with these enhancements, it can have even greater long-term impact for Minnesota families.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,
Denise Butler
Associate Director
ACER (African Career, Education & Resource Inc.)



April 8, 2026

TO: Minnesota House of Representatives
Housing Finance and Policy Committee
Chair Igo and Chair Howard

FROM: Keenan Raverty, President Elect and Chair of Government Affairs
Minnesota Mortgage Association

SUBJECT: Support for HF1879 to fund Housing Education Counseling and Training

The Minnesota Mortgage Association (MMA) submits this letter to renew our support for funding Homeowner Education, Counseling, and Training (HECAT) and HF1879.

The MMA is Minnesota's professional trade association for mortgage banking/mortgage lending which serves professionals in the mortgage industry statewide by advocating for, collaborating with, and educating our members. We also partner with like-minded organizations working to make homeownership more accessible to Minnesotans. The HECAT program, and HECAT funded homeownership advisors, are vital to these accessibility efforts.

HECAT funded counselors support households in all phases of their housing journey through homebuyer counseling/ financial wellness coaching, homeownership education, and foreclosure prevention. Counselors are trained to meet residents where they are and offer unbiased advice.

The Minnesota Mortgage Association encourages your support of HF1879, which provides critical resources to support homeownership advising services in our state.



Neighborhood Development Alliance Wabasha Center, 481
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Ph. (651) 292-0131 Fax (651) 292-0925
www.nedahome.org

April 3, 2026

Minnesota House of Representatives
Housing Finance and Policy Committee

Subject: Support for HF1879 to increase funding for Housing Education Counseling and Training

Dear Chair Igo, Chair Howard, and members of the committee:

My name is María Steffel, and I serve as Executive Director of Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA), a nonprofit organization based in the Twin Cities Metro Area. For nearly four decades, NeDA has provided culturally responsive homeownership counseling, financial coaching, and foreclosure prevention services—serving predominantly Latino, immigrant, and low- to moderate-income families, many of whom are first-generation homebuyers. We were the first organization in the Twin Cities to offer homeownership counseling services in Spanish, and today our 100% BIPOC staff continues to deliver trusted, community-centered support across diverse neighborhoods.

I am writing to urge your support for HF1879, which provides critical investment in Housing Education, Counseling, and Training (HECAT). This funding is essential to ensure that families across Minnesota have access to the guidance and tools needed to achieve and sustain homeownership.

One family we worked with—a young Latino couple with two children—came to us after being denied a mortgage due to limited credit history and high debt. Through one-on-one coaching, we helped them build credit, reduce debt, and develop a sustainable budget. After more than a year of dedicated effort, they successfully purchased their first home. Today, they are not only stable homeowners but are building generational wealth and serving as a source of inspiration within their extended family network. Without access to free, culturally competent counseling, their path to homeownership would have remained out of reach.

This story reflects a broader reality. NeDA serves families across the Twin Cities whose experiences are shaped by systemic barriers, language access challenges, and income disparities. Our clients represent a rich diversity of cultures, including Latino, African, Southeast Asian, and other immigrant communities. Many are navigating complex financial systems for the first time. Our services meet them where they are—providing not just information, but trusted guidance rooted in lived experience and cultural understanding.

The need for this work has never been more urgent. Minnesota continues to face one of the widest racial homeownership gaps in the nation. Without intentional investment in education and counseling, too many families remain excluded from the stability and opportunity that homeownership provides. At the same time, rising housing costs and economic uncertainty are increasing the risk of foreclosure for vulnerable homeowners.

Increased HECAT funding would allow NeDA to ensure access to these critical services by:

- Increasing the number of families, we can serve through one-on-one counseling and group education
- Reducing waiting times for foreclosure prevention support during times of financial crisis
- Expanding language access and culturally specific programming
- Strengthening long-term financial coaching to support sustainable homeownership outcomes

This investment is not only about housing, but also about equity, economic mobility, and the long-term health of our communities.

We respectfully urge you to support HF1879 and ensure that organizations like NeDA can continue to provide life-changing services to families across Minnesota.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to housing stability.

Sincerely,

María Steffel

Executive Director/Chief Manager

msteffel@nedahome.org

Neighborhood Development Alliance, Inc.

481 Wabasha St. S. St. Paul, MN 55107

“Building Homes, Partnerships and a Great Neighborhood”

Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity Employer





April 8, 2026

Chairs and Members of the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee,

Metro Cities, representing the shared interests of cities across the metropolitan area at the Legislature and Executive Branch, appreciates the opportunity to comment on HF 1879 - Kozlowski, which provides funding for the Homeownership Education, Counseling, and Training (HECAT) Program at the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency.

The state must be an active participant in providing funding for housing, and state funding is a major and necessary component for the provision of housing. Current resource levels are insufficient to meet the spectrum of needs in the metropolitan region and across the state.

Metro Cities supports additional funding for the HECAT program, because it helps avoid foreclosures, improves homeownership rates, and supports the financial wellness of future homeowners so they are aware of their rights, options, and costs associated with owning a home. This program is an important part of supporting the spectrum of housing needs in the region.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Ania McDonnell'.

Ania McDonnell
Government Relations Specialist

HF 1879 Homeownership education, counseling, and training program funding provided; and money appropriated

I am a homeowner in support of the concept of this bill. However, there needs to be a specific directive that the education, counseling and training needs to include information that is specific to when the home involves a homeowners association. This could be done by allowing funding for community-based organizations to implement education, counseling and training for homeowners or potential homeowners.

In Minnesota there are just under 8,000 HOAs, which includes more than 1.5 million residents or 27% of all Minnesotans, according to a February 2026 report from the Department of Commerce. Over 80% of new home construction in Minnesota is part of a HOA.

This matters because help for homeowners or potential homeowners make fully informed decisions and choices is currently very limited and almost non-existent.

- I spoke to Commissioner Ho about the need to help HOA homeowners to make fully informed choices, and she was against the idea. Her rationale was that she didn't want to tell people where to live. The logic in this and the justification for it makes no sense, but she refused to explore what options they "could" do instead. Please note that Tal Anderson participated on the legislative workgroup, and records from those meetings will show he offered nothing to address the need for education and support for homeowners.
- The Minnesota Homeownership Center doesn't provide direct services to homeowners. They also were represented on the legislative workgroup and heard the need for education and training for HOA homeowners. However, none of the organizations they refer people to actually do any training that is specific to HOAs. The executive director told me she knows there is a need for it, and they are looking at doing something 3rd quarter, but don't have specific plans in place for what that might look like.
- HomeStretch first time homebuyer classes tell you to "read the documents," but they don't teach how or what to look for. They also don't teach about the language that is specific to HOAs, such as what is a CCR, what do bylaws mean or even how to read a financial statement.
- Realtors will help a homeowner to get "the documents," but they are unwilling to help the potential homeowner with "reading" them.
- Municipalities establish the HOAs, but it is difficult to get them to even hold a town hall meeting, let alone offer any help to homeowners for how they are run. The League of Minnesota Cities was represented on the legislative workgroup. They heard the stories from homeowners, but are not willing or interested in providing anything meaningful for homeowners or potential homeowners.
- Counties who fund first time homebuyer classes through their CDAs also have been unwilling to explore options and possibilities for what else they could be doing, as well.
- There are several organizations that provide training for HOA board members, but none of these offer anything specific or relevant to homeowners who are not on the board of directors.

I have a group of homeowners who are willing to help develop the material, and a group of community-based organizations willing to host workshops and classes, as well.

Thank you,

Becky A Cole

HOA Homeowner