

April 22, 2020

Dear Chair Hausman, and House Housing Finance and Policy Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HF 4541. Housing instability and burdensome housing costs were already at a peak before COVID-19, and the presence of our current national health crisis further exacerbates the issue. The funding and provisions included in HF 4541 would provide protections and emergency housing assistance to Minnesotans during a time when people across our state have lost their income and are looking to local government and the Legislature for support.

Even prior to the current public health crisis, 16,000 Minnesotans were evicted each year and the number of people experiencing homelessness is on the rise. The collective cost of responding to this level of housing instability is felt across our systems both at the local and state level. We know from our shared efforts to keep people in their homes both helps support individuals, families and communities in Minnesota and is a strategic and pragmatic use of public funds.

We appreciate and welcome past and future partnerships to support housing stability. In the City of Minneapolis, we created the Minneapolis Gap Funds for Housing to meet immediate needs of Minneapolis residents who are facing housing insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic. We moved swiftly to set up this program and built a coalition of trusted community partners to provide targeted relief to low-income Minneapolis renters. The City has set aside \$3 million for this fund from existing City resources. We expect these funds to serve 1,500 renters and families across our City. The application period opens today and we anticipate demand will far exceed available resources.

While we are extremely proud of the City's work to provide immediate relief to our lowest income households, we know it will not extend far enough toward assisting the thousands of Minneapolis residents who have lost income and are struggling to pay rent because of the pandemic. We cannot do this alone. State support is critical to meeting the needs of Minneapolis residents. Of the City's estimated 175,000 total households, more than 100,000 – a majority in the City – have incomes under 300 percent of federal poverty, which means they are eligible to receive assistance under HF 4541. The housing assistance provided by this bill, combined with the protections for renters and mortgage holders, are critical to ensuring that families will have the opportunity to remain in place during this crisis.

We are grateful for your leadership on this important issue. Please call upon us if there is additional information that we can provide about the importance of housing assistance for Minneapolis residents.

Sincerely,



Mayor Jacob Frey



Council President Lisa Bender