



Legal Services Advocacy Project
970 Raymond Avenue, Suite G-40
St. Paul, MN 55114

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Esther Agbaje
State Representative
Minnesota House of Representatives
437 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55115

Re: HF 628 and HF 3287

Dear Rep. Agbaje:

Legal Aid writes in strong support of HF 628 and HF 3287. HF 628 would require the court to note whether a verdict is pending or has been reached and prohibit a tenant screening company from reporting an eviction filing unless a verdict in favor of the plaintiff has been reached. HF 3287 would establish a Minnesota Stable Housing Mediation Grant Program that would fund efforts to “provide mediation services to benefit renters, property owners, households, utility providers, and homeowners statewide and increase awareness of access to mediation services and expand statewide mediation services.” Both bills would advance the important policy goal of increasing housing stability, especially for Legal Aid’s low-income renters, who tend to be disproportionately BIPOC renters.

HF 628 addresses a longstanding and vital issue that has vexed legislators and housing advocates for some time. As you know better than most, eviction filings, which are mere allegations of a violation of lease or law, carry heavy consequences for renters with evictions on their records in terms of their prospects of future housing, with the ripple effects that come with unstable and substandard housing.

While it is true that making these filings public is consistent with our open system of government, this “guilty until proven innocent” effect has been shown to be devastating for renters and exacerbates racial disparities and prejudice. HF 628 presents an elegant way of balancing the rights of renters with the “right to know” of landlords and the public.

HF 3287 sets as its worthy goals to: “increase access to housing mediation throughout the state, increase the availability of culturally specific dispute resolution programs, [and] reduce the need for court actions.” Any legislation that can achieve those goals is worthy of passage. Thank you for authoring these bills. Legal Aid reiterates its support for them and urges their passage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Elwood".

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney