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Dear Governor Walz, Lt. Governor Flanagan, Majority Leader Gazelka, Minority Leader Kent, Chair Pratt, Chair Rosen, Speaker Hortman, Minority Leader Daudt, Chair Mahoney, and Chair Carlson,

I am writing today to ask your support for SF 4540/HF 4611, a bill introduced by Senator Melisa Franzen and Representative Aisha Gomez to establish an emergency community relief grant program to support Minnesotans who fall through the gaps of federal stimulus grants, unemployment insurance, and other relief programs.

Some individuals, in Minnesota and across the country, do not fit neatly into the categories for relief. For example, students who are over the age of 17 were not eligible for \$500 stimulus grants as dependents or for \$1200 stimulus grants as adults. At the other end of the age spectrum, elderly and disabled individuals not receiving Social Security are ineligible for many relief programs. Unemployment insurance benefits do not cover tipped employees at a rate commensurate to their real earnings.

Emergency community relief grants under this bill would be available to Minnesotans who are suffering financial hardship because of Covid-19 and are unable to access other assistance. The grants would be limited to \$1500 and would be specifically targeted to pay for food, emergency household items, rent support, utility bills, and other similar expenses. They would be administered through local organization, associations, foundations, and financial institutions, keeping decision-making local throughout the state.

People across the state and in all age groups need and will benefit from this targeted relief. This legislation is essential to patch some of the holes in the safety net for the most vulnerable Minnesotans.

As president of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local Union 663, which represents 13,200 workers at grocery stores, retail establishments, food processing plants, healthcare, and other facilities throughout the state of Minnesota, I ask that you please support SF 4540/HF 4611. Members of UFCW Local 663 and many other hardworking families across the state will benefit from this emergency community relief grant program.

Sincerely,

Matt Utecht  
President  
UFCW Local 663