



March 1, 2021

Chair Jamie Becker-Finn  
Members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

**Re: Letter in Support of House Files 835, 1060, 450, 400, 398, 399**

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN) submits this letter to express our support for House Files 835, 1060, 450, 400, 398, and 399, and to relay how deeply important the renter protections contained in these bills are for addressing the safety of domestic abuse survivors. VFMN is a statewide coalition of 90-member programs working to end relationship abuse. VFMN member programs provide direct services and support to survivors of domestic violence throughout the State of Minnesota.

Our current rental system is riddled with barriers that far too often leave survivors facing the unacceptable choice between homelessness or living with continued violence. These barriers are avoidable, and the bills before you today present practical solutions to addressing them.

- Source of Income Discrimination: Housing benefits, such as vouchers, provide the financial support many survivors need to leave an abusive situation. Amending current statute to clarify that source of income discrimination is not permissible will increase the ability of survivors to utilize benefits such as vouchers to access housing free from abuse.
- Need for Eviction Reform: Survivors often face evictions based on factors beyond their control and tied directly to the abuse they suffered. Yet, the current eviction system moves so rapidly that survivors do not have time to access the financial and legal assistance they need to prevent or expunge improper evictions, and once an eviction is filed it can create insurmountable barriers to new housing. Provisions that allow for increased notice, due process, control over public reporting of pending eviction matters, free legal representation, and accessible eviction expungement would protect survivors and prevent many from being plunged into homelessness.
- Need for Increased Tenant Protections: Fleeing violence, and maintaining stable housing in the aftermath of abuse, is dangerous and challenging. Facing additional obstacles in the rental setting, such as hidden rental fees or substandard heat and repair conditions in a rental unit, can easily derail the success of relocation and independence for a survivor. Basic tenant protections that create safeguards such as transparency for rental costs, minimum heating standards, and improved methods to addressing emergency repairs can prevent these obstacles.

House Files 835, 1060, 450, 400, 398, and 399, would address many of the inappropriate hurdles and system failures that exist in our current rental system and are roadblocks to survivors obtaining stable housing for themselves and their children. We urge you to pass these much-needed policies as a step towards ensuring safety for survivors across Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Katie Kramer  
Policy Director  
Violence Free Minnesota

Anne Applebaum  
Housing & Economic Justice: Policy Program Manager  
Violence Free Minnesota