

March 21, 2023

Chair Youakim, Vice Chair Clardy and Members of the Minnesota House School Finance Committee,

My name is Jill Stewart-Kellar and I am Assistant Director of the Career and Technical Education for Intermediate School District 916. I serve as the proud principal of our Career and Technical Center and advocate for career pathway opportunities in the 13 member school districts of the Northeast Metro Intermediate district and everywhere!

I am writing to express strong support for HF 2492. In addition to helping individuals and families who are underhoused find housing, changing the language to include independent and intermediate school districts would allow the Challenge Housing funding to jumpstart construction occupations programming in school districts statewide.

I have the privilege to serve as the lead administrator at the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District's Career and Technical Center. We enroll over 1,000 high school students in career and technical education programs which they take alongside their traditional high school academic coursework. One of our programs in high demand with high school students is our Construction Occupations: Student Built Home program. This program is wildly popular and has a waiting list of students each year.

Over the past 18 years, our high school students have built 25 homes in the suburbs north and east of St. Paul. This would be an impossible endeavor if it wasn't for our partnership with the City of North St. Paul. We realize how lucky we are to have this partnership and recognize the struggles of so many schools and districts to offer similar programming, regardless of how popular because there aren't funds available to pay for the materials for such a program.

However, allowing schools and districts independent and intermediate alike, to access funds for projects that would benefit low income or underhoused individuals and families in our community, as HF2492 does, would open the door for many more schools to create or expand programming in the skilled trades areas.

Again, if K-12 schools and districts were allowed to apply to the state Housing Agency, as this bill permits, we could accomplish three very important things:

1. Provide more permanent affordable housing to people across the state - at a very modest cost because of the state support.
2. Provide more opportunities for schools to train young people in construction skills - an area in high demand by students and industry alike.
3. Help increase the number of low income people who own homes.

Respectful submitted,



Jill S. Stewart-Kellar
Assistant Director of Career and Technical Education