



January 18, 2023

Chair Noor

Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

Dear Chair Noor and members of the Human Services Finance committee,

**Chum** is a 501(c)(3) organization whose programs serve more than 8,000 low-income, homeless, hungry, isolated, or otherwise marginalized community members each year in Duluth. For 50 years now Chum has focused on working hard to become unnecessary in this community, but unfortunately a 27% increase in shelter guests in 2022 provides a sense of the escalation in the number of persons experiencing homelessness.

The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH) is writing to express support for HF444. Chum is a member of MCH, and earnestly joins the coalition in advocating towards ending unsheltered homelessness. The successful passing of this package will bring us that much closer to creating that reality. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness, so we want to lift up three of the items listed in the legislation, even as we fully support everything included.

### **\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities**

While MCH is advocating for \$200 million in funding, we are very pleased with \$150 million being included in HF444. Unfortunately, according to the Homelessness Management Information System, 80 of our 87 counties have either no shelter beds or lack enough shelter beds to meet the need. In Duluth we have 155 shelter beds in the entire city, about a third of them reserved for domestic violence situations. In 2021 Chum provided overnight shelter to over 1000 kids and adults; when shelter beds are filled, we are forced to resort to providing space to sleep in chairs or on the floor.

Chum responded to MCH's statewide survey to gauge the needed state resources to build, acquire, or renovate shelters to meet the need. MCH identified nearly \$200 million in capital needs statewide that would create or preserve over 3,400 shelter spaces. In addition to Chum, every region in the state needs access to additional shelter spaces, and this statewide funding source would provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the need such as those that are culturally responsive, gender affirming, accessible, and are low barrier; shelter is the first step to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

*"CHUM is people of faith working together to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives and organize for a just and compassionate community."*

**\$40 million in 2024/25 and \$70 million in 2026/27 for the Emergency Services Program (ESP)**

We are thrilled that HF444 includes our full request for ESP. This funding will allow organizations and local communities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supporting shelters, outreach, motel vouchers, and other key resources and services. This increase will be key to supporting both new and existing shelters in providing services to people experiencing homelessness.

**\$9 million for the Transitional Housing Program (THP)**

Along with responding to our unsheltered homelessness crisis, HF444 includes funding for THP which is vital for many individuals and families leaving shelter. THP helps individuals and families obtain stable housing where they can develop good rental history while finding a permanent housing destination. Chum works for housing first, but recognize stabilization comes with wrap around services and community relationships that transform a house into a home, with a sense of belonging and support.

In addition to the above priorities, MCH supports the remaining items included in HF444:

- Homeless Management Information System
- Homeless Youth Act
- Homeless youth; chosen family grants

We applaud the leadership for bringing this bill forward. Shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness.

Sincerely,



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