



May 1, 2020

Rep. Lyndon Carlson, Sr.
Chair, Minnesota House Ways and Means Committee
479 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Carlson, Ranking Member Garofalo and Members of the House Ways & Means Committee:

Thank you for your leadership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As you consider House File 4541, Greater Twin Cities United Way would like to provide its support for additional funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to build pathways toward prosperity and equity for all, touching over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. Through our work in partnership with more than 95 nonprofit agencies, we know that a stable home is the foundation that enables Minnesotans to thrive. Yet many families struggle to access and maintain stable housing, especially now.

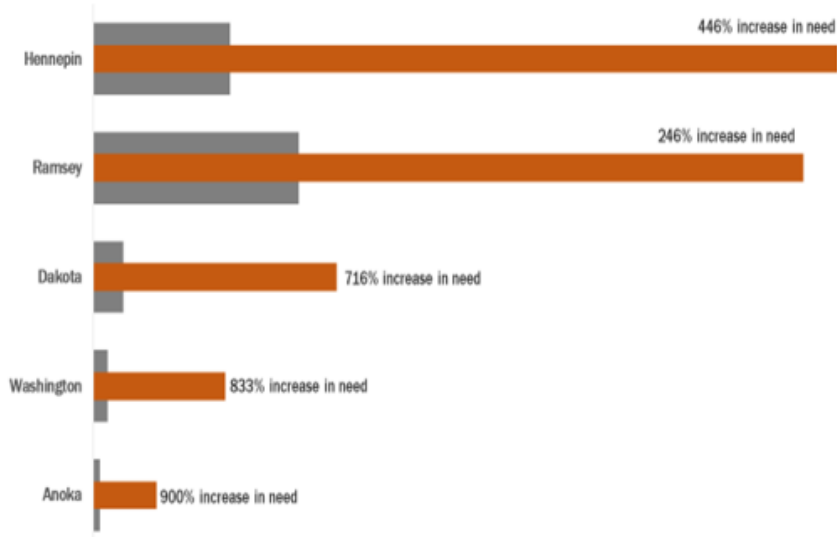
The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly difficult for Minnesotans in low-wealth households. Closures of restaurants, small businesses, and other employers have put hourly workers in challenging positions when it comes to paying rent, mortgages, and bills.

Data from Greater Twin Cities United Way's 211 resource helpline shows that Minnesotans are concerned about losing their housing. Rent assistance referrals made by 211 helpline specialists for Twin Cities metro counties during the last two weeks of March 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, show a dramatic increase.

In the last two weeks of March this year, our 211 team referred 446% more callers from Hennepin County to rent assistance resources compared to last year. In Ramsey County the increase was 246%.

And in surrounding counties the increase in rent assistance requests was even higher – a 900% increase in Anoka County, an 833% increase in Washington County and a 716% increase in Dakota County.

211 Rent Assistance Referrals | March 15 – 31 2019 vs. March 15 – 31 2020



In addition to our 211 referral data, we are hearing similar needs being reported by our non-profit partners. That is why we support a significant investment in emergency funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) as proposed in House File 4541.

FHPAP is an extremely important program that can be used for direct assistance – such as rent, utilities and other expenses – or services like housing search or navigation for low-wealth families and individuals at imminent risk of homelessness.

The need for emergency FHPAP funding is supported by a wide variety of organizations and we believe this is an important way to get support to renters and landlords to help stabilize our housing network.

As our community navigates the COVID-19 crisis, Greater Twin Cities United Way is committed to supporting those impacted by its effects and bringing the community together in the face of this unprecedented pandemic.

We appreciate the hard work you are doing at the legislature and request your support for emergency FHPAP funding.

Sincerely,

Acooa Ellis
Senior Vice President of Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way