

April 4, 2023

RE: Bring it Home Rental Assistance & Metro Sales Tax (HF2335)

Dear Chair Gomez and members of the Tax Committee,

Good afternoon Madam Chair and committee members. My name is Theresa Dolata and I have lived in my South Minneapolis apartment since August 2015. I am here to testify for HF 2335.

I believe that we need to urgently create a rental assistance program as envisioned by the Bring it Home, Minnesota campaign. We must ensure everyone in this state has the rent support they deserve.

This bill is a good step forward toward this goal. I know this because I am one of these Minnesotans. I pay over 70% of my income each month towards my rent. Before that I was sleeping in someone's basement. Before that I was also paying market rate and sharing an apartment with roommates and still paying over 70% of my income towards rent. I first became eligible for a Federal section 8 choice voucher back in 2005 when I was discharged from the hospital to my car. BUT the waitlist to apply for a federal voucher in Minneapolis was not open to apply to. In March of 2019, 14 years of waiting and trying, I finally got on the waitlist for a section 8 choice voucher. 14 years and you know what the real kicker is? I called in October of 2021 and the person on the phone told me that they were just issuing vouchers to people who got on the waitlist in 2008. That means I still have over a decade before I will actually have the Federal choice voucher that I qualify for now! I am permanently disabled, work part time to be able to barely survive every month.

I am not alone, my story is similar to stories of hundreds of thousands of families, individuals and seniors sitting on the edge waiting for a voucher. I was disappointed the housing target did not support enough ongoing money for Bring it Home, and now I support us all having to pay a little more sales tax to create a voucher program. Again I ask for you to please pass HF 2335 and not just for me but for all those out there struggling.

As Paul Wellstone said "We all do better when we all do better." HF 2335 can help us do better. Don't we all deserve affordable safe housing. Don't we all deserve "BETTER."

Sincerely,
Theresa Dolata