



2/21/2024

Dear Chair Howard, Vice-Chair Agbaje and Members of the Committee,

The Equity in Place coalition is writing to express our strong support for Representative María Isa Pérez-Vega's HF 2704, which would grant tenants across the state the affirmative right to organize for the stability, safety, and dignity of their homes.

Equity in Place is a diverse group of strategic partners from organizations led by people of color and housing advocacy organizations. We believe that everyone in Minnesota deserves to live where they want to live and have access to opportunity.

We know our state is stronger when families, children and workers can put down roots in the neighborhoods they call home. But housing stability is still a far-away dream for many of the 620,000 renter households in Minnesota who often face affordability issues and/or deal with unjust conditions in their housing. Tenants are increasingly likely to deal with an out-of-state corporation as their landlord, and their ability to request timely repairs, negotiate rent adjustments, and ultimately engage on equal terms has diminished. Because of these factors, renters in Minnesota are forming tenants' associations and organizing against rent hikes, poor conditions, and mass evictions. But there's risk involved — tenants can face retaliation and eviction by their landlords, simply for organizing to improve their lives.

HF 2704 provides a tenant empowerment tool designed to ensure tenants can organize against unfair or illegal practices, without fear that they will be wrongfully retaliated against. Many Equity in Place member organizations work with tenants asserting their rights to dignified housing who then face unfair intimidation and retaliation from landlords for merely asking them to honor their leases and the law. As examples, the New American Development Center worked with renters who were informally evicted and displaced after requesting basic maintenance. In 2022 alone, HOME Line's hotline received 485 calls related to landlord retaliation and intimidation of tenants. This is an issue that our state needs to take a lead in addressing.

Equity in Place urges you to vote YES on HF 2704. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

African Career, Education and Resource Inc (ACER)
The Alliance
Center for Urban & Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota
CloseKnit
Community Stabilization Project
COPAL MN
Harrison Neighborhood Association
Hope Community
Housing Justice Center
HOME Line
Jewish Community Action
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers
MN STEP (Standing Together to End Poverty)
Minnesota Youth Collective
Native American Community Development Institute
New American Development Center
Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association
Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza
Urban Homeworks
West Side Community Organization