



Dakota
Woodlands

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Empowering families experiencing homelessness on their journey to independence.

January 19, 2023

Chair Noor
Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

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

I am writing today to express my support for HF444. Dakota Woodlands has been sheltering families experiencing homeless in Dakota County for over 40 years. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up two of the items listed in the legislation but we fully support everything included.

\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities

While Dakota Woodlands is advocating for \$200 million in funding for emergency shelter facilities, we are very pleased with \$150 million being included in HF444. As a shelter facility, families are counting on us to provide a healthy, safe space for them during their stay. As with many buildings that house a churning populations, there are always capital projects to be done. However, this funding isn't always easy to come by, especially for smaller organizations. This funding is key for organizations like Dakota Woodlands to carry out needed capital projects to upgrade and improve our shelter.

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

We are thrilled that HF444 includes the full request for ESP funding. This funding will allow organizations, like Dakota Woodlands, to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supporting shelters, outreach, motel vouchers, and other key resources and services. This increase will allow shelters like Dakota Woodlands to meet the needs of the increasing number of homeless families in our community.

In addition to the above priorities, Dakota Woodlands 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,
Jennifer Harrison, MA, CFRE
Executive Director