



January 19, 2023

Chair Noor

Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

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

Connections Shelter is writing to express support for HF444. As a shelter provider in Southern Minnesota, we are so thankful that this bill is being heard at this time. Since COVID, we have seen a significant increase in the need for shelter beds. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up three of the items listed in the legislation but 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 our own region, as one of the few shelters that is able to provide low barrier shelter to single men, women, and families, we are constantly at capacity and have a waiting list of over 25 individuals and families sleeping in their cars or places not meant for human habitation while they wait for shelter beds to open. With money earmarked for shelter capital, we can work to meet the increasing needs for shelter beds with innovative and flexible shelter models. We are currently working on plans with the City of Mankato and Blue Earth county to develop a new shelter that would increase bed space in the region by 30 beds. There is currently no funding for shelter capital. Passage of this legislation would allow us to move forward with our plans.

\$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 allows organizations such as ours 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.

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,

Rev. Erica Koser

Director, Connections Shelter