

March 1, 2021

Dear Members of the Judiciary and Civil Law Committee:

NAMI Minnesota is writing to indicate our support of HF 400. People with mental illnesses are much more likely to experience housing instability and Housing is always a top priority for NAMI members. Recovery from a mental illness is rarely linear. Some will experience a relapse in their symptoms after a period of stability, while others may face a mental health crisis for the first time and will need immediate treatment. In these times of crisis, HF 400 will provide a significant protection for people with mental illnesses and other serious health conditions.

If the symptoms of a person's mental illness become more acute and a higher level of care becomes necessary, HF 400 will provide tenants with an opportunity to terminate their lease on the recommendation of a mental health professional with two months' notice. The threshold for terminating a lease under HF 400 is high and will only benefit people with serious mental illnesses.

After inpatient psychiatric or a mental health crisis, it is common for someone to receive treatment at an Intensive Residential Treatment Services or IRTS facility for up to 90 days. This treatment is hugely important to stabilize someone with a mental illness, but it can be disruptive, and some people are unable to pay their rent or stay at their job. In circumstances like this people are at risk of an eviction. As this committee has heard many times, an eviction record creates a significant barrier for people to find a new rental unit.

Without HF 400, people with mental illnesses face an impossible choice where they must choose between seeking the treatment they need and risking an eviction, or delaying the intensive mental health treatment they need. Many people who reside in an IRTS program or a corporate foster care setting may want to return and live independently in community. An eviction would make this process harder. We should not punish renters with an eviction for seeking the treatment they need for a serious mental illness or another health condition. NAMI Minnesota is happy to answer any questions the committee has.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

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Public Policy Coordinator