



April 7, 2021

Chair Schultz and Members of the House Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
RE: Support of provisions in HF2127

Dear Chair Schultz and Committee Members,

Hearth Connection's mission began a little over 20 years ago via a pilot program designed around a simple idea - to simplify the complex housing and support services systems to better meet the needs of those experiencing long-term homelessness. This comprehensive approach to ending long-term homelessness brings integrated social services and affordable housing support to individuals, families and unaccompanied youth; and innovative financing, centralized oversight, and a regional approach to collaboration between state, local and tribal governments, and service providers in 4 regional projects throughout the state. This approach has proven to be incredibly successful in simplifying the complexity of the various systems that individuals experiencing homelessness encounter on their journey to housing stability. Hearth Connection participant households experience success in many areas, including an average increase of \$169 in monthly income. This increase sets these households on the path toward long-term housing stability and increased self-sufficiency.

The Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services Fund (LTHSSF) was the foundation of these regional projects and remains an integral part of each region's success and continues to be an irreplaceable part in the state's overall plan to end homelessness. The Long-Term Homeless Supportive Services Fund enables governments, community partners, and social service agencies to leverage various state and federal funding streams to maximize the impact of these funds, and fuels innovation to find more efficient and effective ways to serve the unique populations of individuals, families and unaccompanied youth facing barriers to stable housing and increased self-sufficiency.

We sincerely thank Rep. Erin Koegel for authoring HF1382 that proposed an increase to the LTHSSF and to Chair Schultz and this committee for your consideration of carrying a \$1 million annual increase for this fund. This increase will allow Hearth Connection and other organizations receiving this funding to expand services across the state. We welcome the additional reporting provisions that will help demonstrate the results that this fund is seeing across the state and the important place it holds in the state's overall plan to end homelessness.

Hearth Connection also supports these provisions within HF2127:

- \$2.5 million annual increase for short-term housing facilities to increase the supply and improve shelter conditions. Our work shows us that providing homeless individuals a more stable, short-term housing situation helps to ensure that an individual experiencing a crisis does not fall deeper into that crisis and is instead positioned to seek supportive services necessary to transition into more permanent housing.
- \$9 million annual increase for emergency services grants which are essential to providing those experiencing a housing crisis to access not only safe and sanitary shelter but also important services to help stabilize their immediate situation.

Thank you for your time and dedication to serving the people of Minnesota. Hearth Connection looks forward to partnering with you to continue to find innovative ways to deliver quality, efficient, and effective support services that successfully position all Minnesotans to achieve safe, stable, and affordable housing. Please consider us a resource in that partnership.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Thomas O'Leary". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "T".

David Thomas O'Leary
Interim Executive Director