



1200 Second Avenue South
 Minneapolis, MN 55403
 612-204-8500
 cctwincities.org

Representative Aisha Gomez
 Chair, Preventing Homelessness Division
Via Electronic Delivery

March 29, 2022

RE: Support for HF4225 DE (Preventing Homelessness Division Report)

Chair Gomez and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, I write in strong support of the investments proposed in the Preventing Homelessness Division Report and to thank you for your ongoing commitment to preventing and ending homelessness in Minnesota.

The COVID-19 pandemic shone a spotlight on the gaps and inadequacies of our state's emergency shelter system but also gave us a glimpse at the impact we could have on making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring when investments are scaled to the true scope of the need and partners are aligned and coordinated in their response. The investments proposed in your Division Report would strengthen Minnesota's homelessness response in three important ways to ensure we move forward, and not backwards, as we shift towards a post-pandemic world:

- **Supporting long-term investments to stabilize the emergency shelter system:** Significant, ongoing investments in the Emergency Services Program (ESP), Homeless Youth Act and shelter-linked mental health grants will provide the flexibility and public funding needed for shelters and day service centers to support those in crisis and help them build a foundation for future success. Stable, predictable funding is needed to plan and implement the operation and service structure needed to minimize the length and recurrence of shelter stays and improve homelessness outcomes.
- **Supporting the transition of temporary shelter supports put in place during the pandemic:** Funding for the Ramsey County Continuum of Care and Hennepin County regional homelessness response efforts will prevent a funding cliff that threatens to displace hundreds of vulnerable individuals. These one-time investments will help ensure the continuity of expanded shelter operations and outreach in the short-term, while more deeply affordable housing units are being developed.
- **Reforming systems to promote housing stability:** In addition to increasing public investments, we must also look at ways to improve the systems currently in place to support those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. Reforming Housing Support to ensure veterans and individuals with disabilities aren't forced to pay more than 30% of their income toward housing is a critical change needed to address the financial barriers that currently deter moves out of shelter and which create roadblocks for individuals working toward greater housing and economic independence.

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.

Our state is at a turning point. More than any other year, Minnesota has an opportunity to make bold investments and reforms that can disrupt trends in homelessness and improve housing stability. The Preventing Homelessness Division Report is a strong statement in support of this work, and we look forward to working with you throughout the coming weeks to advance these proposals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Schmidt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorna Schmidt, Public Policy Manager
lorna.schmidt@cctwincities.org