



March 21, 2022

Representative Aisha Gomez
Chair, Preventing Homelessness Division

Dear Representative Gomez,

I am writing to express our strong support for Hennepin County's inclusion of St. Stephen's Human Services Shelter in their request. There is an urgent need for emergency shelter designed to give people the safety, stability, and services they need. St. Stephen's emergency shelters have operated at capacity for many years. Our street outreach workers need new options for people who are resistant to shelter. Throughout our history, we have provided emergency shelter as best as we could in spaces not specifically designed for shelter. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, we operated hotel shelters to provide safer spaces for the unsheltered in our city.

\$10 million will enable St. Stephen's to build a shelter that plans to better mitigate Covid 19 risk and be ready for future challenges that put people experiencing homelessness at risk. We recently received a \$1.5 million gift to help acquire the land for the shelter project. The shelter's design was guided by the direct input of shelter guests who worked directly with architects and staff to learn from them about their needs for emergency shelter.

Our emergency shelter will provide:

- Capacity for 55 individuals with overflow.
- A shelter sleeping layout with six person rooms versus large, congregate, traditional shelter structure.
- Safe space that does not feel like incarceration.
- A facility built with durable materials designed to stay in good condition.
- Accessible rooms and service spaces.
- Good storage for guests' belongings.
- 24-hour staffing at a high enough level to support guests' needs for services.
- The shelter will be co-located with supportive housing on a property conveniently located near transit in South Minneapolis.

Hennepin County and the State of Minnesota have been valuable partners in our efforts to end homelessness. This is an opportunity to create an enduring resource that will meet the need for effective and safe emergency shelter. We are grateful for Hennepin County's advocacy for the resources we need to build new shelter.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Jensen
Interim Executive Director
St. Stephen's Human Services