



March 2, 2022  
Chair Alice Hausman  
Housing Finance and Policy Committee  
453 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: H.F. 835

Dear Chair Hausman and Housing Finance and Policy Committee members:

Increasing choice and access is critical to addressing Minnesota's affordable housing crisis. Unfortunately, numerous barriers to safe, healthy, and affordable housing exist statewide. Lawmakers must do everything to ensure that households with access to any form of housing assistance do not face source of income (SOI) discrimination. Sections 1, 2, and 3 of H.F. 835, which amend Minnesota's Human Rights Act by clarifying that housing assistance programs are covered by source of income protections, provide one path to reducing barriers and increasing access.

Housing assistance is a valuable tool for helping families remain stably housed and find secure, affordable housing. Multiple studies show that housing assistance reduces homelessness, housing instability, and overcrowding. Stable housing has cascading benefits for individuals, their families, and their communities. Unfortunately, current law protecting housing assistance holders from source of income discrimination is weakened by court interpretation. **A minor tweak to the Human Rights Act, clarifying that housing discrimination based on a person's source of income is illegal, is required to ensure that those with housing assistance can best utilize it.**

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities has found that in states without SOI laws, renters face less choice in the range of cities or neighborhoods where they can find housing. Research has found that households with children and those headed by Black and older adults had significantly lower odds of using their voucher despite their high level of demand for the subsidy. These unequal voucher-use rates remind us that housing assistance does not work the same for everyone.

Source of income protection works. According to research conducted by the American Bar Association, families with federal Housing Choice Vouchers have greater success using their vouchers in jurisdictions with clear SOI laws. A study by the Department of Housing and Urban Development found dramatically lower rates of discrimination against families using Housing Choice Vouchers in areas with strong SOI protections. Failure to amend the Minnesota Human Rights Act by clarifying that housing assistance programs are covered by source of income protections perpetuates harm that is greater for Minnesotans who identify as Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). In Minnesota, 44% of the head of households with voucher assistance are identified as Black/African American (according to data from Minnesota HUD voucher-funded programs from October 2019 through January 2019). Being denied the use of vouchers disproportionately excludes marginalized Minnesotans, and particularly Black Minnesotans, from opportunities that can offer economic security and upward mobility. This is a race equity issue important to Minnesota's ability to decrease the serious rental housing disparities that exist for BIPOC and under-resourced households.

Amending Minnesota's Human Rights Act as proposed in H.F. 835 will improve Minnesotans' access to safe and stable homes. Too often, people eligible for assistance wait years to get on a waiting list for housing assistance, and then wait years more to actually receive it. When these households are discriminated against by property



owners who refuse to accept rental assistance as payment, they are denied the promise and opportunity to find a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Sincerely,

Anne Mavity  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Housing Partnership

Aeon  
African Career, Education, & Resource Inc. (ACER)  
Alexandra House, Inc.  
Align Minneapolis  
All Parks Alliance for Change  
Alliance Housing Inc.  
American Indian Community Housing Organization  
Avenues for Youth  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis  
Central Minnesota Housing Partnership, Inc.  
Churches United (Moorhead)  
City of Minneapolis  
Community Stabilization Project  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Dominium  
East Metro Civic Alliance  
Family Housing Fund  
 Fargo-Moorhead Coalition to End Homelessness  
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund  
Guild  
Haven Housing  
HOME Line  
Hope Community  
Housing Justice Center  
Inquilinxs Unidxs por Justicia  
Laura Baker Services Association  
Legal Services Advocacy Project  
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers  
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)  
Minneapolis Public Housing Authority  
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
NAMI Minnesota  
New American Development Center  
Somali American Social Service Association  
Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership  
Three Rivers Community Action Partnership  
Violence Free Minnesota  
Volunteers of America Minnesota and Wisconsin  
West Bank CDC