



MICAH thanks Minnesota Counties for their work in preventing homelessness and assisting people experiencing homelessness obtain housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

My name is Sue Watlov Phillips, Executive Director of MICAH- Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, President of National Coalition For The Homeless (NCH). I have worked with people experiencing homelessness for over 53 years. Executive Director, Elim Transitional Housing (1982-2012). I experienced homelessness in the early 1970s.

Over ½ of MICAH’s Board and staff have experienced homelessness and/or housing crises. 70% of our Board of Directors and Staff are from diverse communities. We work to ensure people who have experienced homelessness, housing crises, and/or housing discrimination are at every decision making table about their lives.

Our faith calls us to be a welcoming community, to love and treat others the way we want to be treated. MICAH members address the immediate needs of people in our community as we work together to change the structural causes of homelessness/ housing crises and to realize our mission to ensure everyone, without exception, has a safe, decent, accessible home that is affordable.

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1. Thank for your use of Emergency Assistance and Emergency General Assistance in preventing homelessness, providing for immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness and assisting people in obtaining housing.
2. Thank you for your coordination our tax resources with Continuum of Cares (CoC) and Family Homeless Prevention Program (FHPAP) in assisting people at risk and experiencing homelessness.
3. MICAH is concerned about how HUD’s definition of Homelessness is more restrictive than the Dept. Education’s definition of homelessness and ability of counties to have accurate counts of people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
4. MICAH is concerned with backlog of people in Coordinated Entry process and that many people are not accessing housing. In a Ramsey County CoC meeting, it was reported, only 2% of people assessed/screened actually obtained housing. Freedom from the Streets reports people are on wait lists for over a year and people experiencing homelessness are refusing to go through a “racist” and dysfunctional system.
5. MICAH encourages Counties to use Public Service Announcements and their websites to encourage local landlords to apply for Federal Emergency Rental Assistance (\$375 Million in MN now) available later this month through MHFA and some Metro counties to pay back rent of tenants whose incomes were impacted by COVID-19 and to use

the additional \$300 million in emergency rental assistance, MN will receive, from the American Rescue Plan.

6. **MICAH continues to be concerned that the entire Continuum to Housing is not fully funded in Continuum of Cares across the State and that counties are then faced with sheltering people experiencing homelessness longer, at tax payer expense, instead of preventing homelessness initially and assisting people to move into housing more rapidly!**
7. **MICAH continues to be concerned that HUD, through its funding priorities and data requirements through HMIS, continues to limit the flexibility of resources available to local counties and CoCs in designing appropriate local responses to homelessness based on the needs and desires of people experiencing homelessness.**
8. **We are pleased to see Hennepin County adopt the Shelter Residents Bill of Rights into its contracting processes for homeless programs. We encourage all Minnesota Counties to follow Hennepin County's example.**

God's peace,
Sue Watlov Phillips, M.A.
Executive Director MICAH
President, National Coalition For The Homeless