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| Dear Chair Howard, Vice Chair  Agbaje and Members of the Mn House Housing and Finance CommitteeBridgemakers is writing to strongly support HF 2492 because we see immense value in students learning critical home-building skills as they construct homes for low income families and families experiencing homelessness.  We are a group of young Minnesotans who have been actively involved in identifying and helping solve real problems. Some of your committee members may recall that we successfully arranged for thousands of Minnesota high school students to receive federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance after the state of Minnesota misinterpreted federal legislation.  The Mn Court of Appeals unanimously agreed with us (and Attorney General Ellison who supported our effort). So more than $30 million flowed to Mn high school students who had been laid off because of the pandemic.  We have a huge interest in greater use of service - learning - in which young people have the opportunity NOW to make a positive difference as part of their school work.   Our research - done in cooperation with the WIlder Foundation - shows that these kinds of projects have immense value to the community and help to cut down the student-prison pipeline.  Young people who are learning marketable skills and that they can make a positive difference are far less likely to get involved with the juvenile justice system.  And - what's especially relevant to your committee - these programs can produce more urgently needed permanent, truly affordable housing.  This is an urgent need in Minnesota.     After participating in these programs a young person will be able to drive by a home and say, “I helped build that! I made it possible for that family to own a home! I made a difference. " And Minnesota will have more of what it needs - more truly affordable housing - and more young people who have active, positive attitudes.We strongly endorse the proposed revision of state law that is embodied in HF 2492.  We urge you to adopt this legislation.Walter Cortina, Founder & Executive Director Jose Perez, Partner & Treasurer-Secretary Bridgemakers |

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