February 28, 2023

Chair Howard
473 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Howard and Members of the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee:
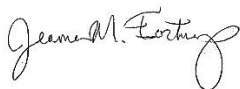
On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), I want to share my strong support for HF1419 (Howard) which provides a meaningful investment to local governments to develop and preserve affordable housing. Minnesota is experiencing its greatest housing shortage in decades and homelessness is on the rise, affecting many facets of life for counties across the state.

AMC, which represents all 87 counties in the state, has increasingly been sounding the alarm on the dire need for affordable housing. A dearth of housing options has catastrophic effects on families, communities, and economies. In Greater Minnesota, the lack of housing is impacting the ability of businesses to survive and prosper as almost all businesses need employees but cannot attract new workers to the area without additional housing options. This has made housing, now more than ever, an economic development issue.

Counties are also witnessing increasing rates of homelessness for families due to a lack of affordable housing as a main cause. Family shelters are often at capacity with waiting lists and counties do not have infrastructure to be able to house those experiencing homeless despite the great need. The local housing aid program established and associated funding in HF1419 will be an essential tool to develop affordable housing so these families can have stable, permanent and safe housing.

We have seen many ways counties have developed creative partnerships with non-profits and developers to get projects built using Housing Infrastructure Bonds and other MHFA programs. HF1419 would represent an innovative new way to accomplish this work and meet the unique needs of communities across the state. I urge the committee to support HF1419 which provides a meaningful investment to address Minnesota's affordable housing needs throughout our state.

Sincerely,

Jeanna Fortney
Policy Analyst