



April 18, 2021

Dear Chair Moran and members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), an organization representing all of Minnesota's 87 counties, we respectfully submit commentary related to county provisions included in HF 991, the omnibus Tax bill.

Youth Homelessness Prevention Aid (*Article 8, Section 4*): As county commissioners from all corners of the state testified to during this session, homelessness does not occur in the vacuum around the metro. Studies already show that a lack of access to stable housing has negative impacts for individuals, families, health systems, and local economies. Relevant to the Tax bill, counties have found that the lack of housing security across the state is having disproportionate impact on the cost of support services they provide, which is leading to a trend of increasing levies attributable to human services budget items. This finding underscores the need to see homelessness as a statewide problem that requires a statewide solution. We appreciate Chair Gomez's thoughtful approach to address the most egregious cases of homelessness: youth homelessness. As one county staff member from greater Minnesota stated in a recent AMC survey: *"Nothing is sadder and more troubling than hearing about a child who goes to school with your kids that has no place to call home at the end of the day."* With the reduced appropriation number—compared to the original proposal—AMC would like to work with the author and staff to consider a certification and redistribution process to maximize limited dollars to the communities in need and with systems set up for immediate work.

County Business Grant Relief Program (*Article 8, Section 5*): Counties' number one priority in 2020 and 2021 has been responding to the effects of the pandemic and supporting a robust, equitable, and sustainable recovery. Last year, counties spent over \$100 million of federal CARES Act resources to assist businesses, nonprofits, and local industries in dire need. In December, the Legislature entrusted counties with an additional \$115 million in targeted business relief dollars resulting in counties working around the clock to create programs, guidelines, applications and distribute thousands of assistance grants within weeks. *In total, counties have stepped up to provide over 15,000 grants to Minnesota-based businesses and nonprofits.* If this provision passes, counties will once again stand ready to help in any way we can to get this much-needed continued assistance out to our local business communities.

AMC thanks members and staff for their hard work in putting together the bill. AMC and counties stand ready to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Matt Hilgart
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Association of Minnesota Counties