



## Lutheran Advocacy - Minnesota

March 4, 2025

Chair Quam and members of the Committee:

**On behalf of Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota, I submit this letter in opposition to HF 1051.**

Lutheran Advocacy-MN is a ministry of all six Minnesota synods and is our state's public policy office of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Our mandate is to work for justice in the areas of hunger, poverty, housing and care of God's creation. We strongly supported the creation of the recent law allowing faith organizations to build sacred communities of tiny homes for people moving out of chronic homelessness.

As you know, the need for housing, especially low-income housing, is great. Houses of faith often wish to help in very concrete ways. The Sacred Communities law makes it possible for any house of worship to explore and possibly create a home for some of our state's most vulnerable residents, regardless of congregation size or wealth. And it recognizes that all of us are God's children, regardless of mental health diagnosis and challenges.

This housing model speaks directly to the strengths of the faith community across our state: community, relationship and accompaniment. It doesn't simply provide that residents be housed. It creates a place where they belong, where they are valued and welcomed. It provides a true home for individuals.

We are **concerned about two major changes contained in the bill**. First, the bill allows a city to prevent a house of faith from building a sacred community by a simple denial. As the bill states, the city may "approve or deny a written plan. . ." This is in direct conflict with the religious liberty guaranteed under the Constitution. It is disappointing to see a bill that would create a municipal version of "not in my backyard." It would be stunning if this committee approved a bill that is such a clear violation of religious rights.

We are also concerned about the provisions requiring that someone with "compliance authority" be on site at all times. There are almost 1,000 ELCA congregations in Minnesota. In my experience, I doubt that any of them have someone with "compliance authority" present at all times people are present, whether for youth activities and sleep-overs, Sunday School, all potlucks, or even every worship. The bill seeks to impose a requirement that will be impossible to meet. Further, the already existing provision that Sacred Communities have one-third to forty percent of the residents be people not coming out of homelessness add the kind of community stability we assume is at root of the provision's intent.

**We urge you to vote no on HF1051.**

Tammy Walhof, Director