Regarding: SF2995 HHS Omnibus Budget Bill & Housing Support

To: Chair Liebling, Chair Wiklund, and Members of the HHS Conference Committee

Dear Chair Liebling, Chair Wiklund, and Members of the HHS Conference Committee,

 We, Street Voices of Change, are a group of people with lived experiences of homelessness who come together to identify issues important to us and work for change in our community. We are writing today to express our strong support for reforms to Housing Support income definitions proposed by both the House and Senate in the HHS omnibus budget bill (SF2955\*/HF2930). These reforms would change the formula of income that goes to housing in the Housing Support program (formerly called “GRH”). Housing Support reform is an issue that is very important to Street Voices of Change, and we are working to raise awareness and support for this important issue.

 These proposed changes are important to us because Housing Support as the program is today keeps people in homelessness or deters people from accessing housing. Too much of a person’s income is taken for housing which makes it difficult for people on the program to afford basic needs like a phone and medication. This takes away people’s agency and ability to build savings to possibly purchase a car or a home of their own. Housing Support is an important program, but the way it is set up currently is not effective at ending homelessness. These changes would change the program so that people who have unearned income such as SSDI or Veteran’s Benefits would only have to pay 30% of their income to their housing, rather than the 80-90% that many people are currently paying on the Housing Support program.

 Thank you for your work on this and we ask for your support as you negotiate the final

terms of the HHS omnibus budget bill.

Sincerely,

Street Voices of Change