![Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota logo]

January 19, 2023

To: Members of the House Human Services Finance Committee

RE: HF444 (Keeler)

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

My name is Josh Hameister. I work for Lutheran Social of Minnesota in the Greater Rochester, MN area. I want to thank you for taking the time to hear my testimonial.

I have worked with homeless youth in the greater Rochester, MN area for over a decade. Youth homelessness is a hidden problem in the Rochester area, and all over the state of Minnesota. Over the last couple of years, Rochester and greater Minnesota has seen an increase in youth homelessness.

Youth experiencing homelessness in greater Minnesota have scarce resources and opportunities. There are not as many housing programs, emergency shelters, drop-in centers, or street outreach programs for youth experiencing homelessness.

Youth become homeless because parents have kicked them out, parents are facing homelessness themselves, or the parents are not mentally stable enough to care for the family or struggle with addiction. Youth who are aging out of foster care are also vulnerable to becoming homeless. Many youth serving agencies have limited funding to serve homeless youth and this funding often goes quickly.

Over the last decade, I have worked with youth programs funded by the Homeless Youth Act. I have witnessed this funding work miracles. I can think of one of my old clients that was homeless 10 years ago and is now a nurse practitioner. This particular youth struggled with addiction and was able to get treatment and get sober. This youth battled homelessness off and on from the ages of sixteen to

twenty-one years old. With HYA funding, our program was able to help this individual create a positive

path towards sobriety, housing, and a college degree.

Thanks again for your continued support for providing funding to youth serving organizations

and funding for other human service programs that help Minnesotans struggling.

Respectfully,

Josh Hameister
Rochester Youth Services
Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota