

Minnesota Coalition *for the* Homeless

February 22, 2024

MN House Human Services Finance Committee

Chair Noor, Chair Stephenson, and Members of the Committee,

Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH) is comprised of over 70 member organizations throughout the state. We are a nonpartisan organization supporting state policy and funding that promotes housing stability and economic security across Minnesota. For forty years, MCH has advocated at the state level for increasing resources to people experiencing homelessness through the entirety of their journey to find a permanent home.

We write the committee today in support of the A-18 Amendment to HF2000. MCH knows that there are many reasons individuals and families experience homelessness. It is well established that gambling of any kind can contribute to homelessness by draining individuals and families' financial resources leading to instability and housing insecurity. In addition, gambling may exacerbate existing mental health and substance use issues which compounded with financial instability often lead to homelessness.

Claudette McDowall, a current MCH Fellow and lived experience expert shares the following, "In 2014 I became homeless. I never in my life thought I would ever end up homeless, but after going to the Casino with a friend for the first time, I won big. I thought that would be the case every time, so I kept going back to the Casino to the point where I was cashing my paychecks there and driving my bank account into the negative. It got to the point where my paychecks were being garnished by my bank and I fell into a financial spiral. I ended up not being able to pay my rent, I was evicted, and I ended up in an emergency shelter. With time, I was able to get back on my feet, get an apartment through Project in Pride and Living and get a certificate in accounting. I now work and spend time advocating with the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless to urge the state to invest in programs that work to prevent homelessness, and that if an individual family does experience homelessness, it is brief and safe. This bill is personal as I have experienced the negative impacts of a gambling addiction and any resources directed at helping individuals and families who face the most negative impacts by the expansion of gambling is the right thing to do."

MCH has been advocating for increased investments in the Emergency Services Grant Program (ESP) for years. We are very thankful for the historic investments this body made in 2023, and know that to meet the current needs of unsheltered Minnesotans, we must keep investing in the creation of a statewide shelter system that is safe, culturally inclusive, and has the resources

needed to keep the doors open. Homelessness looks different across the state and ESP is the most impactful and flexible funding program that addresses the specific needs of communities. Thank you for your consideration of the A-18 amendment which we strongly support.

Sincerely,
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless