



Date: March 13, 2023

Regarding: HF 1686 (Hollins) and SF 2033 (Marty)

I am writing to you today in my capacity as president of the Saint Paul Downtown Alliance to thank you for your support of SF 2033 and HF 1686.

In Downtown Saint Paul, the number of people experiencing homelessness has risen sharply and conspicuously over the last few years. The impact downtown is profoundly impacting the quality of life, driving up management and security costs, and challenging our efforts to recruit and retain employers. We need help. One-time funds enabled Heading Home Ramsey and partners to not only increase shelter capacity but also create more effective supports and interventions to move people quickly from homelessness to housing. But some funds will expire this spring and more funds are needed.

Heading Home Ramsey's request for \$75 million will fund five critical interventions for five years:

- Continued shelter options for single adults including expanded women's shelter options. The need for women's shelter space frequently exceeds supply.
- 100-bed shelter for families and additional support for families. This model, established during the pandemic, has produced significantly improved outcomes for families, moving them into housing more quickly.
- Continued operation of day service shelters, providing support to individuals to help them stabilize, connect with resources, and move off the street.
- A low-barrier pilot program serving frequent users of emergency shelter with intensive, 24/7 staffing.
- Outreach, system improvements, and extreme weather support to help address critical immediate needs and move people onto a path to housing more quickly.

These interventions are designed to fill critical gaps while the \$74 million invested by Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul into the construction of deeply affordable housing comes to fruition. Importantly, these efforts will help us achieve our goal of making homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring – especially for people of color and indigenous people. In Ramsey County, people who are African American are 8 times more likely to be homeless than people who are white. People who are Native American/Indigenous are 14 times more likely to be homeless than their white counterparts. These unacceptable disparities must be addressed.

We know you share our concern for these families and individuals experiencing homelessness. Thank you for considering their proposal at this time of critical need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Spencer".

Joe Spencer, president