



April 4, 2023  
Chair Gomez  
Members of the House Tax Committee

Chair Gomez and Members of the House Tax Committee,

We are Sheila Stafford and Deric Hirocho, and we are writing to express our support for the House File 2335. As individuals who have experienced the difficulties of finding affordable housing, we know the impact this bill could have on thousands of Minnesotans like us.

I (Sheila) moved to Minneapolis under the impression that I would have a job with the company I was already working with. Coming from another town in Minnesota, they told me I would have a position in another branch of the company, if I moved. When I got here, though, that position fell through. I stayed with friends for a couple of weeks, but it got to the point that I couldn't overstay my welcome. So, I moved to a homeless shelter.

I (Deric) came up to the Twin Cities about twenty years ago to live with my sister. I am from Chicago, but it made sense to try another place once my family started moving. For a few years, I stayed with family and friends, mostly couch-hopping. But I had the resources to get my own place, and I started renting an apartment for a while. But once the landlord raised the rent, I couldn't afford it anymore.

After I moved out of my apartment, I kept bouncing from place to place. I spent some time at a homeless shelter in Minneapolis, and that's where I met Sheila. People told me she was quiet and that she didn't want to talk to anybody. But for some reason, we just clicked. Within just a few minutes, we exchanged phone numbers. And we've been together ever since.

We spent some time trying to find the right place for us to stay for the long term. We knew more than anything that we didn't want to be apart. In a world that was hectic and complicated and loud, being together helped make everything feel calmer. Being together made the rest of the world bearable.

The workers in the shelter helped us each get permanent supportive housing with Aeon. It took a couple of years, but eventually we got placed in a building in downtown Minneapolis where we could each have our own apartment and still be together. At the same time, the workers at the shelter helped us get vouchers to help cover the rent on our apartments.

Having a stable place to stay, where we can be together and where we don't have to worry about the rent, has changed everything. Today, we have three cats together, who are our babies. We help plan community events in our building – coffee hours, craft and game nights, movie nights, and other things like that. We love where we live. And our housing vouchers made it possible.

The subsidies that the metro sales tax would provide would help others like us find and maintain safe housing. We ask you to support and pass HF2335 this year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sheila Stafford and Deric Hirocho

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