



# PHUMULANI

*The voice of immigrants and refugees in America*

January 19, 2023

Chair Noor

Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

Dear Chair Noor and members of the Human Services Finance committee,

Phumulani Minnesota African Women Against Violence (Phumulani) is writing to express support for HF444. As an organization that works with women experiencing domestic violence and intimate partner violence, we see every day that access to shelter space can make the difference between a survivor getting the help she needs and having to remain in an unsafe situation. Shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up three of the items listed in the legislation but we fully support everything included.

#### **\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities**

We are very pleased with \$150 million being included in HF444. Unfortunately, according to the Homelessness Management Information System, 80 of our 87 counties have either no shelter beds or lack enough shelter beds to meet the need. Every region in the state needs access to additional shelter spaces, and this statewide funding source would provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the need such as those that are culturally responsive, gender-affirming, accessible, and are low barrier; shelter is the first step to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

#### **\$40 million in 2024/25 and \$70 million in 2026/27 for the Emergency Services Program (ESP)**

We are thrilled that HF444 includes funding for ESP. This funding will allow organizations and local communities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supporting shelters, outreach, motel vouchers, and other key resources and services. This increase will be key to supporting both new and existing shelters in providing services to people experiencing homelessness.

#### **\$9 million for the Transitional Housing Program (THP)**

Along with responding to our unsheltered homelessness crisis, HF444 includes funding for THP which is vital for many individuals and families leaving shelter. THP helps individuals and families obtain stable housing where they can develop good rental history while finding a permanent housing destination.

In addition to the above priorities, Phumulani supports the remaining items included in HF444:

- **Homeless Management Information System**
- **Homeless Youth Act**
- **Homeless youth; chosen family grants.**

We applaud the leadership for bringing this bill forward. Shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness.

Sincerely,

Comfort Dondo

Executive Director

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