



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

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May 9, 2022

Representative Tina Liebling, Chair
Representative Jennifer Schultz
Representative Aisha Gomez
Representative Dave Pinto
Representative Tony Albright

Senator Jim Abeler, Chair
Senator Paul Utke
Senator Michelle Benson
Senator Mark Koran
Senator John Hoffman

RE: SF4410 (HHS Omnibus Budget Bill) – Preventing Homelessness Provisions

Chair Liebling, Chair Abeler and Members of the HHS Conference Committee,

Minnesota has right now an historic opportunity to prevent and end homelessness and, in doing so, support our most vulnerable and under-resourced Minnesotans in achieving stable housing that is foundational to their overall health, educational success and employment opportunities. As you negotiate the terms of the HHS conference committee report, we urge you to adopt the Preventing Homelessness provisions included in House Article 18, which would disrupt current trends and ensure we go forward, not backwards, as our state rebuilds from the pandemic.

Housing Support Reforms

Please adopt the House position to reform Housing Support income calculations, so individuals with disabilities and veterans aren't forced to pay more than 30% of their benefit toward housing. Right now, individuals who receive SSI, RSDI or federal veteran's benefits and enroll in Housing Support can be forced to pay upwards of 90% of their monthly benefits toward their housing costs. The burden of this obligation holds tenants in extreme poverty and forces them to choose between paying their monthly Housing Support payment to avoid eviction or paying other necessary expenses, like transportation, a phone or even child support. For other eligible individuals, it's enough to decline the program entirely, causing them to stay in shelter or on the streets instead. This critical reform would improve housing and homelessness outcomes while putting money back in the pockets of the lowest income Minnesotans.

Emergency Shelter Services

Please adopt the House position to invest \$75 million in the Emergency Services Program (ESP). ESP is the state's primary funding source for emergency shelters throughout Minnesota, supporting operations and services like housing navigators, medical and mental health help, employment counseling and job placements, transportation and more. Significant, ongoing investments in ESP this session are critical to providing the local flexibility and public funding needed for shelters and day service centers to support those in crisis, and predictable funding is needed to plan and implement the services needed to minimize the length and recurrence of shelter stays and improve homelessness outcomes.

We also ask you to include the House positions to invest \$10 million annually in the Homeless Youth Act and \$1.65 million annually in Shelter-Linked Mental Health grants. These investments will provide dedicated funding to address the state's youth homelessness crisis and ensure mental health supports are embedded in shelter operations to improve outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness.

Transitioning Temporary Shelter Supports

Please support the transition of temporary shelter systems put in place during the pandemic by adopting the House position to invest in the Ramsey County Continuum of Care and Hennepin County regional homelessness response efforts. These one-time investments will help ensure the continuity of expanded shelter operations in the short-term, while more deeply affordable housing units are being developed. Funding now is critical to prevent a funding cliff that threatens to displace hundreds of vulnerable individuals.

Our state is at a turning point, and with 8,000 Minnesotans experiencing homelessness on any given night, we can't afford to do nothing. On behalf of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis and the more than 23,000 men, women, children and families we serve each year, we respectfully ask for your support this session.

Sincerely,



Wendy Underwood
Vice President, Social Justice Advocacy & Engagement



Lorna Schmidt
Public Policy Manager