



March 15, 2023

House Housing Finance and Policy Committee
473 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: HF 2335

Dear Chair Howard and Members of the Committee,

I'm writing on behalf of Emma Norton Services, an organization that offers multiple configurations of permanent supportive housing to families and individuals for over 20 years. We serve nearly 300 people in our permanent supportive housing sites – two of which we own and manage, and the other program engages with private landlords to provide the housing. For our two site based programs, the funding available through Strengthen Supportive Housing would be invaluable.

It has been well documented that permanent supportive housing works for people experiencing homelessness. With the addition of Coordinated Entry, Emma Norton Services and other providers are now receiving referrals for some of the most challenging and complex households who are chronically homeless, have multiple disabling conditions and need individualized services to move them from homelessness to housed. As service providers, we are undertaking an enormous task to provide client centered, trauma informed, life changing services – and our current level of service funding does not match with the resources needed for this work.

As an example, we operate Emma's Place in Maplewood – a supportive housing for large families that opened in June of 2001. The supportive housing project is designed for single head of household families with a minimum of three children with at least one member of the family having a disabling condition. In reality, the families typically have five or more children to fill the Section 8 requirements and the parent plus one or two of the children have mental health needs. At that time, the organization secured a federal HUD contract to help cover support services and operating costs. It is now over 20 years later, and that HUD contract has not increased the service funding at all in this time. With the current needs of the families, we have more than doubled the number of staff working at the site, as well as we are paying significantly more for staff salaries, benefits and other programming costs.

Funding for increased mental health services, additional staff, or more hours of front desk security would be helpful for family stabilization once they move into the site. The more quickly families stabilize, then the more quickly we can assist them with finding their next step housing out into the community into a scattered site program that also takes more funding resources for continued expansion.

Thank you for all you have do to make sure some of the most vulnerable Minnesotans have access to safe, supportive housing!

Sincerely,

Tonya Brownlow
Executive Director