



**MICAH does not support HF 1382
Expanding funding for long term homeless supportive services**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.

My name is Sue Watlov Phillips, Executive Director of MICAH- Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing, President of National Coalition For The Homeless (NCH). I have worked with people experiencing homelessness for over 53 years. Executive Director, Elim Transitional Housing (1982-2012) I experienced homelessness in the early 1970s.

Over ½ of MICAH’s Board and staff have experienced homelessness and/or housing crises. 70% of our Board of Directors and Staff are from diverse communities. We work to ensure people who have experienced homelessness, housing crises, and/or housing discrimination are at every decision making table about their lives.

Our faith calls us to be a welcoming community, to love and treat others the way we want to be treated. MICAH members address the immediate needs of people in our community as we work together to change the structural causes of homelessness/ housing crises and to realize our mission to ensure everyone, without exception, has a safe, decent, accessible home that is affordable.

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**MICAH does not support HF 1382 which provides an increase in funding for
Long term homeless supportive services**

MICAH supported this legislation, passed in 2005, to provide supportive services with supportive housing for people who had experienced long histories of homelessness (4x in last 3 years or continuously for 1 year). The program has no time limit on it, as it assists people to stabilize their lives. The support services are optional for people. People utilizing long term homeless supportive services funding in supportive housing are not counted as homeless in the Point in Time Count (PIT); because they are permanently housed, yet the service funding is coming from homeless resources.

MICAH continues to support the need for longer term housing and support services for people with long histories of homelessness; but we believe the ongoing funding for these supportive services should be transitioned to Medicaid based services(see the attached newspaper article

<https://www.startribune.com/minnesota-launches-pioneering-medicaid-program-to-combat-homelessness/571878882/>) and the supportive housing should be transitioned to subsidized housing through Housing Choice Program (Section 8) as authorized (but never implemented

by HUD) in the Federal McKinney Vento HUD Homeless Program as amended by the HEARTH Act in 2009.

We recognize many of our homeless providers do not have capacity or the expertise to be Medicaid providers and it is easier, simpler, and they receive more resources by funding these services through the Long Term Homeless Services program. However, MICAH believes that we cannot afford to keep using homeless resources to fund these services at the expense of fully funding the entire Continuum to Housing.

Since 2005, the majority of Minnesota's housing and homeless resources have been targeted toward long term homeless supportive services and supportive housing at the expense of providing expanded resources for Prevention, Outreach, Shelter, Transitional Housing programs and affordable housing options without supportive services for people experiencing homelessness. The result is that many people, experiencing long term homelessness today, never had the opportunity to have their homelessness prevented, have an outreach worker help them get into the very limited number of shelter or transitional housing programs and the only resource available to them, was to be homeless long enough, to meet the long term homeless definition and try get into supportive housing. Junail Freeman Anderson, founder of Freedom from the Streets and a MICAH Board Member has often stated "people experiencing homelessness, would lie to get into long term supportive housing programs because it was only housing opportunities available to them."

When people no longer need long term supportive services and supportive housing there are limited, if any, affordable housing options available for them to move into. MHFA, (after multiple years of MICAH's comments on MHFA's Annual Plans about these concerns), designed a pilot program to move some people out of supportive housing who no longer needed supportive services. We need a functioning system that provides housing opportunities affordable for people when they no longer need long term homeless services and supportive housing. Long term homeless supportive services and supportive housing are very expensive programs, for us as tax payers, costing at least \$15,000-\$40,000/ household (depending on household size)/ year. We need to utilize mainstream supportive services resources through the Medicaid program and demand HUD implement the use of Housing Choice Vouchers for supportive housing to fund these program and not continue to use homeless funding resources for people who are now living in permanent housing.

To conclude: MICAH believes it is imperative to fully fund the entire Continuum to Housing to prevent and reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness, from becoming long term homeless, and to utilize the Medicaid programs for supportive services prior to expanding the long term homeless supportive services program.

God's peace,
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