

House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
Representative Jamie Becker-Finn
559 State Office Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 16, 2021

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Committee Members,

Homes for All is a coalition of 270+ organizations that reaches every corner of the state and represents non-profits, direct service providers, faith communities, the private sector, local municipalities, and philanthropic organizations - all working in unison to amplify the housing needs at the Capitol of households statewide.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the lives of Minnesotans, the Homes for All Coalition's top priority is ensuring housing stability for Minnesota households and our housing market. This is why we have been continuously advocating for shelter support, rental assistance, homeowner assistance and the eviction suspension since the start of the pandemic a year ago. As the Minnesota Legislature contemplates the future of Executive Order 20-79, we are deeply concerned about the effects of a potential off-ramping of the eviction suspension and how it would impact tens of thousands of Minnesota renter households. The suspension has saved lives and prevented housing instability, Minnesota's current suspension should remain in place until the public health crisis has clearly ended and recent federal funding has time to help cover unpaid rents:

- [Research out of UCLA estimates](#) that Minnesota's eviction suspension reduced the number of potential COVID-19 cases by 22,200 and saved 680 lives between March and September 2020. This data does not include the past 6 months during which states saw dramatic increases in infections and deaths, so it is reasonable to estimate a much larger impact.
- If the suspension ends abruptly, the influx of eviction filings could be astronomical, making it even more difficult for the court system to effectively provide adequate due process for tenants—a problem that was abundantly clear even before the pandemic.
- Eviction filings and displacement (court cases and less formal evictions) can haunt households for years adding further stress to our already tight affordable housing market.
- The CDC suspension is much less protective than Minnesota's suspension and it is currently set to end in two weeks.

The influx of almost \$675 million in federal emergency rental assistance provides an opportunity to make both landlords and tenants whole, preventing most likely evictions. [House File 12](#) is designed to do just that—it largely transitions the current eviction suspension into statute tied to the timeline of our state's ongoing public health emergency and later will help to prevent evictions for nonpayment by ensuring tenants and landlords have time to apply for and secure rental assistance. The provisions in the bill make it clear to tenants, landlords, and the courts about what the rules are and will be, which should prevent some confusion and complications when there are cases that must end up in court action.

We think this bill is generally designed to prepare our state for the end of the eviction suspension, but want to be clear that any off-ramp that is finally negotiated should recognize these key points:

- Based on the experiences of community members with the last round of rental assistance, it is clear that time, staffing, and technical assistance is needed for tenants and landlords to apply and

secure these funds. Tenants and landlords waited for weeks to hear about their applications.

- The timeline and process for filing an eviction for nonpayment of rent should be aligned with the application and documentation process involved for tenants and landlords to secure rental assistance. Eviction filings and lease terminations should not be allowed to proceed until it is clear tenants and landlords have had adequate time and ability to access all available funds.
- We are concerned that including material violation/breach of lease as an exception to the suspension conflates harmful actions such as possession of illegal guns or drugs with innocuous lease violations that can be remedied—such as having a “unauthorized” guest stay over to assist a tenant who may be ill. If material violation/breach of lease remains in this bill, a reasonable notice period (longer than 7 days) should be provided by landlords prior to eviction. This will give tenants the option to remedy a violation or choose to move before an eviction is filed.
- Lastly, rental assistance programs and our state’s eviction process must be reevaluated and designed to also prevent threats of eviction and displacement in the future -- issues that disproportionately impact low-income and BIPOC communities. The unprecedented economic impacts of the pandemic are still being experienced by those same communities and will continue to be for some time. In many ways these systems were simply broken before the pandemic—they should be fixed to avoid a return to the “normal” level of 15,000+ eviction filings per year.

We know that where we live impacts everything. Home is where children learn, workers earn and how communities thrive. The Homes for All coalition is available to regularly engage in conversations about an effective path forward to ensure stability for all. For any additional information to help inform your policy decisions. Please reach out to the policy co-chairs, Michael Dahl (651-336-5902), Kari Johnson (612-387-6398), or Zack Eichten (651-829-0888) should you need any further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Pastor Sue Koesterman & Chad Adams
Homes for All Co-Chairs