January 19, 2023

Chair Noor

Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

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

I'm writing to convey Simpson Housing Services' full support of HF 135 – the proposed legislation from Hennepin County that invests in vital capital infrastructure, and includes critical service funding. These elements are central to our mission of housing, supporting and advocating for members of our community who are experiencing homelessness.

As you are aware - Simpson's shelter has been a vital part of the area's homelessness response infrastructure for 40 years. Located at 2740 1st Avenue South in Minneapolis, in the basement of the now defunct Simpson United Methodist Church, the shelter provides safe temporary housing and essential services to unhoused single adults in Hennepin County, the majority of whom are Black, Indigenous and People of Color, reflective of the racial disparities in homelessness. Shelter is a life-saving component in our area's homelessness response.

The Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments Project, proposed by local non-profit leaders Simpson Housing Services and Project for Pride in Living, will replace Simpson's emergency shelter, and add 42 units of affordable supportive housing dedicated to serving homeless individuals through the County's Coordinated Entry System. The church building was never designed for human habitation and is need of repairs well beyond what is feasible or even possible.

The project incorporates an innovative low-barrier shelter model designed to meet the short-term housing needs of shelter guests through enriched services, so guests can achieve increased stability and better housing outcomes as a result. Relying on trauma-informed design principles, with significant input from current and former shelter guests, it is a reproducible model that takes a holistic approach to serving people experiencing homelessness. The facility will be open 24-hours, 365 days a year; given that many guests are aging and/or suffer from disabilities and chronic health conditions, the 24/7 model allows for a more robust and focused service delivery while increasing the safety, security, and comfort of guests. Health care for the homeless will have a clinic and lab on site to provide health services for all housing residents and shelter guests. We are grateful for your support!

Thank you for considering Hennepin County's funding request for safe, dignified shelter. Please contact me for another visit to our current shelter or additional information regarding the Simpson Community Shelter and Apartments. Together we can assure our community retains this vitally important resource.

Sincerely,

Steve Horsfield
Executive Director
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