

March 21, 2023

Representative Tina Liebling  
Chair, House Health Finance Committee

Senator Melissa Wiklund  
Chair, Senate Health & Human Services Committee

**Re: Reforming Housing Support Income Definitions (Governor's Budget, HF2900/SF2966)**

Chair Liebling and Chair Wiklund:

As organizations with shared interest in ending homelessness and promoting housing stability, we write to express our strong support for reforms to Housing Support income definitions as proposed in the Governor's budget (HF2900/SF2966, Article 5, Sections 4 and 9-10) and carried in HF732/SF992.

Housing Support is an established, statewide program with a proven track record of moving thousands of Minnesotans out of homelessness each year. It is one of the state's best tools to respond to the homelessness crisis, but reforms are needed to ensure we're supporting positive and equitable outcomes for those in need.

Housing Support recipients with income are required to make monthly payments towards the cost of their apartment. Under current policy, individuals with "unearned income" can be forced to pay all but \$121 of their benefits toward their housing costs each month. "Unearned income" includes Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Retirement Survivors & Disability Insurance (RSDI), veterans benefits, Tribal per capita payments, and even unemployment insurance income and child support

This financial burden can equate to as much as 90% of one's income every month and holds individuals in extreme poverty, forcing them to choose between paying their monthly Housing Support payment or paying for other necessities like a phone, transportation, clothing and emergency expenses. For some Housing Support-eligible individuals, it's enough to cause them to decline the assistance entirely and choose to stay in shelter or on the streets instead. Others face a perpetual threat of eviction and a return to homelessness.

The provisions carried in HF2900/SF2966 (Article 5, Sections 4 and 9-10) and HF732/SF992, are based on the premise that stable, affordable housing means not paying more than 30% of one's income on rent. These changes will help more individuals exit homelessness, help those with housing keep it, and support those working towards program independence by allowing them to build the skills and savings needed to successfully transition off it.

This legislative session brings an opportunity to improve housing and homelessness outcomes while putting money back in the pockets of the lowest-income Minnesotans. We ask for your support.

Sincerely,

218 Housing  
2nd Chance Mentoring  
Agate Housing and Services  
Align Minneapolis  
Amherst H. Wilder Foundation  
Avenues for Youth

Catholic Charities of Southern Minnesota  
Catholic Charities Twin Cities  
Chum  
Clare Housing  
Divine Konnections Inc.  
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*(List of supporters continues on second page)*

Esperanza United (formerly Casa de Esperanza:  
National Latin@ Network)  
Greater Twin Cities United Way  
Haven Housing  
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Hennepin County  
Hmong Public Health Association  
Homes for All  
Housing Matters  
Institute for Community Alliances  
Integrated Community Solutions, Inc.  
Launch Ministry  
Legal Services Advocacy Project  
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable  
Housing (MICAH)  
Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans  
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center  
Minnesota Leadership Council on Aging  
Minnesota Social Service Association  
NAMI Minnesota  
Olmsted County  
Open Your Heart to the Hungry and Homeless  
Our Saviour's Community Services  
Our Spring Lake Store  
Partners for Housing - Mankato, MN  
Project for Pride in Living  
Radas Health  
Rainbow Health Minnesota  
Range Transitional Housing, Inc.  
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Street Voices of Change  
The American Legion Department of Minnesota  
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