

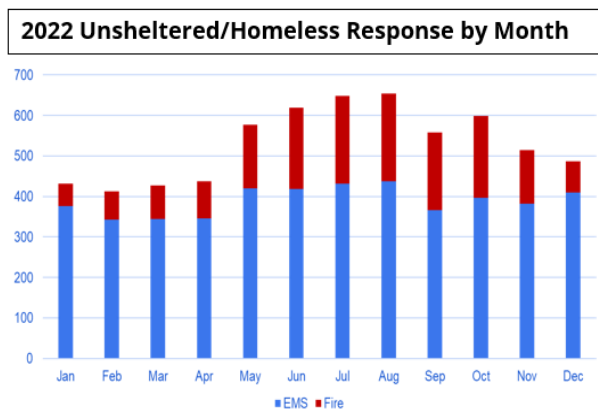
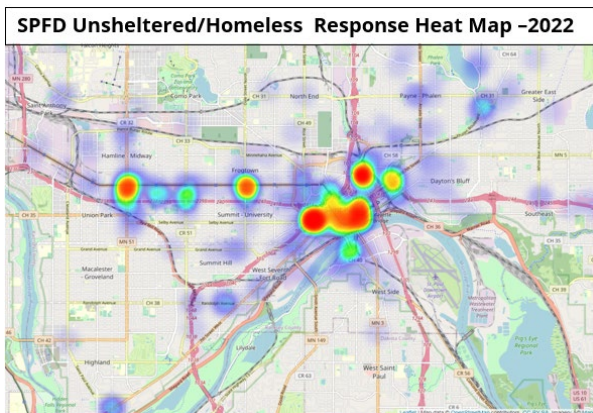


February 28, 2023

Dear Chair Noor and Committee Members,

On behalf of the City of Saint Paul Fire Department, I am writing to express my support for HF 1686, which would provide funding for Heading Home Ramsey to continue their critical work of supporting individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

The Saint Paul Fire Department protects residents and visitors through public education, emergency medical services, fire suppression, and all hazard responses. We partner with the police, safety and inspections, emergency management, parks and recreation, public works, Ramsey County, and community groups to provide innovative solutions to public safety. From 2021 to 2022, the fire department experienced a 15% increase in calls for service involving unsheltered/homeless members of our community. These calls for services are largely centralized around our downtown area and have a seasonal peak during warmer summer months. Our emergency response model will not be able to sustain such rapid call volume growth without a negative impact on response times, or our ability to respond to other critical calls for service.



In 2022 our department responded to 60,265 calls for service. 6,365 incidents involved members of our homeless or unsheltered community, equaling 10 % of the department's total run volume. The department has made efforts to better track calls involving the unsheltered/homeless and provide for the alternative care these



SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

SAINT PAUL FIRE DEPARTMENT
BUTCH INKS, FIRE CHIEF

645 Randolph Avenue

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Tel: 651-224-7811 | Fax: 651-228-6255

individuals need. We provide shuttles to warming centers during colder months, do safety risk assessments at encampments, and are onboarding social workers in partnership with Ramsey County.

This bill would fund additional shelters, facilities, and daytime spaces for the unsheltered and homeless members in our community, easing barriers so they can receive the critical care or assistance they need. Our emergency rooms, jails, and detox facilities are ill-equipped to provide for the volume of people they see daily who just need shelter, or who are struggling with behavioral health issues. Additional shelters within the county will lessen the strain on our hospitals and public safety entities, while meeting the needs of our most vulnerable residents.

The City of Saint Paul remains committed to partnering with Heading Home Ramsey on this important work and I thank you for your consideration of HF 1686.

Sincerely,

Butch Inks, Fire Chief