

February 2, 2021

Chair Jennifer Schultz  
Members of the Human Services Finance Committee  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

**Re: Support of House File 21**

Dear Chair Schultz and Members of the Human Services Finance Committee,

Thank you for your continued work to address issues of homelessness during the 2021 legislative session. As we continue to work together to end unsheltered homelessness, we know that significant investments must be made into our shelter infrastructure system.

**We know: Shelter saves lives. Housing ends homelessness.** On any given night in Minnesota, there are about 20,000 people experiencing homelessness (2018 Wilder Homeless Study.) We lack the capacity to meet the shelter and housing needs of our citizens across the state: 80 out of the 87 counties in Minnesota lack enough shelter beds for individuals (according to the Homelessness Management Information System.) As a result, individuals and families are dying outside. As a state, Minnesota needs to do better.

With organizations all across Minnesota, we are advocating for a \$50 million investment in state resources to improve & expand shelter infrastructure. Shelters are the starting point to gaining long-term stability. Expanding shelter beds will provide immediate and temporary housing for our most vulnerable minnesotans. Emergency shelter beds generate a short-term solution for individuals and families sleeping outside. Investing in resources to expand emergency shelters will make improvements to Minnesota's rental and housing markets, while sustaining a healthy and prosperous community.

The \$50M request has been divided into two bills: one is a \$25M cash request (general appropriation) found in HF21, which will fund construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of shelter spaces. This general fund appropriation of \$25 million found in HF21 will pair with a future \$25M bonding request to meet the shelter infrastructure needs across Minnesota.

Now is the time to invest in our shelter infrastructure. Investing in construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation for emergency shelters will empower communities across the state to find innovative, flexible solutions that address homelessness in their communities.

Sincerely,



Rhonda Otteson, Executive Director of Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless