



MINNESOTA STUDENT ASSOCIATION

May 2, 2021

Dear Chair Hausman, Chair Draheim, and members of the Conference Committee,

My name is Sam Parmekar and I am the State Government Director for the Minnesota Student Association, the undergraduate student government at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. I write to you today to urge you to adopt two vital protections for student renters in this year's omnibus housing finance and policy bill.

The first section is Article 6, Section 7, requiring prorated rent for short-end leases, located at lines 30.1 - 30.10 of the side-by-side. A short-end lease is typically a 12-month lease that requires the tenant to move out part way through the final month, giving the landlord a few weeks to perform maintenance before new tenants move in. These are really common on college campuses, as most units on a property are turning over at the same time as the new school year approaches. However, student tenants with short-end leases are typically required to pay a full month's rent for the final month, even though they are only allowed to occupy the unit for part of the month. This language does not seek to prohibit short-end leases, it merely ensures that tenants are charged fairly. Requiring last month's rent to be prorated is about balance, ensuring that tenants are only paying for what they're receiving.

The other section is Article 6, Section 10, early renewal, found on lines 30.27 - 31.2. Over the past decade, leasing cycles have started earlier and earlier on college campuses. It's fairly common for students to sign a lease in October or November that won't begin until the next September, locking them in nearly a year in advance. Part of the reason that this happens is because large national rental companies will tell student tenants that they need to renew their lease in the fall if they want to stay in the same unit next year, which puts a lot of pressure on students to make a quick decision. This creates problems if a student decides they want to study abroad, move for an internship, or transfer schools, as they typically can't get out of their lease once it's signed. The language in this section says that a tenant may not be required to renew their lease for the first four months of a lease lasting ten months or longer, thereby easing the pressure on student tenants and giving them a grace period to consider their housing options for the next year. This still affords a minimum of six months for landlords to find prospective new tenants, but puts some guardrails on unreasonably early lease renewal deadlines.

These problems persist across the state, wherever there is a college rental market. Over the past two years, we've consulted this language with student leaders from Duluth to St. Cloud to Winona. These modest, bipartisan provisions strike a fair balance between renters and housing

providers in college rental markets. Importantly, it also empowers student renters to shop around and consider all housing options in their market, allowing smaller landlords to compete against the larger national rental companies that have dominated on many campuses in recent years.

Finally, I would like to thank Chair Hausman and Rep. Theis for including these provisions in HF 1077, as well as Rep. Her and Rep. Jurgens for their strong support in committee. I regret that we ran out of time to hear this proposal in the Senate Housing Committee, but I hope you will support these common-sense reforms nonetheless. Thank you for your hard work on housing issues and for considering the needs of student renters.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam Parmekar
State Government Director
Minnesota Student Association