



VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROJECT

SERVING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN NORTHWEST MINNESOTA

January 19, 2023
Chair Noor
Members of the Human Services Finance Committee

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

I am writing to express support for HF444. Violence Intervention Project has been advocating towards ending unsheltered homelessness for a number of years and this package will make it that much closer to becoming a reality. Our mission is "Restoring hurt lives and building stronger communities." We serve and support victims of domestic and sexual assault. We serve 400-600 individuals annually, in five counties in NW Minnesota. We are one of the only emergency shelters in our area that serves victims fleeing violence and offers housing programs for homeless victims. We typically have a full shelter and often have someone staying in a makeshift room in our common area. Shelter bed expansion would enable us to serve more individuals and families with safe shelter and housing support. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up three of the items listed in the legislation but we fully support everything included.

\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities

While MCH is advocating for \$200 million in funding, we are very pleased with \$150 million being included in HF444. Unfortunately, according to the Homelessness Management Information System, 80 of our 87 counties have either no shelter beds or lack enough shelter beds to meet the need. MCH completed a statewide survey to gauge the needed state resources to build, acquire, or renovate shelters to meet the need. We've identified nearly \$200 million in capital needs statewide that would create or preserve over 3,400 shelter spaces. Every region in the state needs access to additional shelter spaces, and this statewide funding source would provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the need such as those that are culturally responsive, gender affirming, accessible, and are low barrier; shelter is the first step to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

\$40 million in 2024/25 and \$70 million in 2026/27 for the Emergency Services Program (ESP)

We are thrilled that HF444 includes our full request for ESP. This funding will allow organizations and local communities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supporting shelters, outreach, motel vouchers, and other key resources and services. This increase will be key to supporting both new and existing shelters in providing services to people experiencing homelessness.

\$9 million for the Transitional Housing Program (THP)

Along with responding to our unsheltered homelessness crisis, HF444 includes funding for THP which is vital for many individuals and families leaving shelter. THP helps individuals and families obtain stable housing where they can develop good rental history while finding a permanent housing destination.

In addition to the above priorities, MCH supports the remaining items included in HF444:

- **Homeless Management Information System**
- **Homeless Youth Act**
- **Homeless youth; chosen family grants**

We applaud the leadership for bringing this bill forward. Shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness.

Sincerely,
Staci Reay, Fund Development Manager