



Rochester Public Schools

Independent School District 535

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Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Health and Human Services Committee
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2107
St. Paul, MN 55155

Representative Tina Liebling
Chair, Health Finance and Policy Committee
477 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

My name is Lindsey Riess-Wilson and I am the McKinney Vento Liaison for Rochester Public Schools, also doubling as a site supervisor for our Heading Home Corps AmeriCorps members. I am writing in support of the Heading Home Corps appropriation in HF 2900/SF 2966. Heading Home Corps is an important partner to our district as we work to serve our students and families.

Currently, I supervise 3 Housing Resource Navigators through AmeriCorps' Heading Home Corps. Amelia Morrow who is based within our elementary schools, Daysha Walker who is within our middle and high schools and Gloria Winslow who serves with me at the Facilities Services Center. We are so thankful to have the support of AmeriCorps and the Heading Home Corps as the numbers of students and families has increased significantly well over 30 percent in the past year alone. Currently we are at about 560 students who are facing some sort of housing insecurities. By having the support of the members embedded into our schools, we are able to connect with each of these families and provide ongoing support and connection to resources within the community while doing our best to ensure all of their basic human needs are met. Schools are amongst the most trusted locations for families and by having our members on site, they are able to be a part of that meaningful connection.

Each member works referrals as they come in from our buildings. They make connections with the school support staff and really work to create and maintain a trusting relationship with each family they are referred to, along with the support system that may already be in place for the family ranging from Child Protection to Youth Behavioral Health. They do tasks such as providing laundry tokens and soap, doing case conferences to discuss housing/education needs, they communicate with landlords and navigate the housing barriers most of our family's face. They really become a voice for the families that need the support and assistance the most. One thing my team truly prides themselves on is advocacy. We have seen so many positive outcomes from this alone.

Although we have many success stories, one that comes to mind is a success story where Amelia Morrow was able to work alongside one of our families through their eviction process, ensure they were able to get the items such as a parent's ashes out of their home by communicating with the proper parties the family didn't even know existed. By being present through all of the hardship, she was able to help navigate finding new housing while advocating for the family based off of everything they had recently been through. Amelia's effort is persistent and her communication is professional, welcoming and allows families to truly feel safe and comfortable connecting with her and that alone is a success story as homelessness is one of the most vulnerable times in one's life. Each of the members bring a set of skills that is undeniably a major asset to not only our school district but to the families within it.

Thank you,

Lindsey Riess-Wilson

Transitions and Fostering Connections Coordinator
Rochester Public Schools