



March 5, 2025

Re: Modifications and funding for the high-rise sprinkler grant program (HF 1334)

Chair Igo and members of the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee:

The League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the opportunity to voice our support for HF 1334 (Noor), which makes important modifications to the existing high-rise sprinkler grant program to improve the effectiveness of the program and extend the programs reach to include more buildings in need of retrofitting. HF 1334 also appropriates an additional \$10 million in general fund resources for this crucial program.

Through surveying of our member cities, the League of Minnesota Cities has determined that more than a dozen cities both within the metropolitan area and in greater Minnesota have both public and privately owned high-rise multifamily buildings that are not equipped with fire suppression sprinkler systems. Retrofitting high-rise buildings, many of which provide housing for low-income residents, with sprinkler systems is costly for both housing authorities that operate publicly owned housing and private property owners.

Since the program's establishment in 2023, limited resources have been made available to qualifying property owners to help support retrofitting buildings to include life safety fire suppression sprinkler systems. With the additional infusion of resources and modifications to the program, more properties in need of sprinkler systems will be eligible and the state can be one step closer of ensuring all high-rise buildings are sprinkled.

We thank Representative Noor for his support of this program since its inception and willingness to make adjustments to the program to improve its effectiveness in addressing the unique needs of these unsprinkled high-rise buildings.

Thank you for your consideration and we encourage members to support HF 1334.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lightfoot". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Daniel Lightfoot
Senior Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities



**FIRE
MARSHALS
ASSOCIATION OF
MINNESOTA**

March 3, 2025

Dear members:

The Minnesota Fire Association Coalition (MNFAC) is made up of the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association, the Minnesota State Fire Department Association, the Minnesota Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators, and the Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota.

The MNFAC supports House File 1334 (Noor, Igo, Howard) and Senate File SF1895 (Mohamud, Clark, Draheim). High-rise sprinkler system grant program modified, Minnesota Housing Finance Agency funding provided, money transferred, and money appropriated.

This bill appropriates \$10 million to expand retrofitting residential high-rise buildings with lifesaving fire sprinklers. Fire sprinklers are crucial in high-rise buildings because they can quickly contain and extinguish a fire at its source, preventing it from spreading rapidly throughout the building, thus giving occupants precious time to evacuate safely and minimizing damage to the structure, especially in scenarios where reaching higher floors with firefighting equipment can be difficult. Essentially, fire sprinklers save lives by providing immediate fire suppression in a situation where escape routes may be limited due to the building's height.

The bill also expands the application criteria to allow more to expand eligibility and protect more residents.

We appreciate your support of this initiative.

Sincerely,

Chief BJ Jungmann
Legislative Chair, MNFAC
legislative@msfca.org



Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota

www.fmam.org



March 3, 2025

RE: Funding for Residential High Rise Sprinkler Retrofits HF 1334

On behalf of the Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota we offer our support to HF 1334 expanding the eligibility for the retrofitting of fire sprinklers in residential high-rise buildings in Minnesota.

Fire sprinklers have been proven to save lives should a fire occur. Containing the fire to the room of origin and often time to the item or origin is critical in giving occupants time to escape before exit routes are blocked by smoke, heat, and fire. According to Minnesota data from 2023 there were 1,870 fires in multifamily dwellings causing 97 civilian injuries and 8 deaths. Although this bill only affects a small number of the multifamily dwellings in Minnesota, we still feel strongly that this legislation will help to reduce future injuries and deaths from fire in multifamily dwellings.

Thank you for our consideration of these comments. Please contact me with any questions. I can be reached at 952-233-9575.

Sincerely,

Tom Pitschneider
President, Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota.



\$10 million appropriation to expand retrofitting residential high-rise buildings with lifesaving fire sprinklers.

This second phase for a competitive application process grant program will again be administered through the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA).

HIGH RISE RESIDENTIAL FIRE SPRINKLER PROGRAM

House File 1334 (Noor)/ Senate File 1895 (Mohamed)

BACKGROUND

Following the tragic fire at the Cedar-Riverside high rise in 2019 (which resulted in five deaths), the Minnesota State Legislature began the critical effort to protect citizens living in residential high-rise housing with a mandate in 2021 to install sprinkler retrofits in residential high-rise public housing. Next, in 2023, the Legislature implemented an incentive and \$10 million grant program for non-profit and for-profit residential high-rise housing to retrofit their buildings with fire sprinklers. Lessons learned from this first round of grants is that the criteria was too restrictive and limited applicants, making it difficult for building owners to qualify for grant assistance.

HF 1334 / SF 1895 would appropriate an additional \$10 million and expand eligibility criteria.

ADDITIONAL 2025 ELIGIBILITY

1) Expanded grant to include "loans" to ensure that potentially eligible tax credit properties abide by IRS rules pertaining to grants. In these cases, MHFA would structure the assistance as a zero percent deferred forgivable loan.

2) Better defines a high rise building by adding "at seven stories or more" to the existing 75 feet or above the lowest level of fire department vehicle access.

3) Ensures all affordable housing - as defined by the federal government - is eligible for grants.

EXISTING ELIGIBILITY

- Provide permanent residential housing.
- Have at least two-thirds of its units affordable to households with an annual income at or below 50% of area median income.
- Accept rental subsidies (such as Section 8 of the United States Housing Act of 1937, as amended).
- Meet the requirement for matching funds:
 - Each grant to a for-profit organization requires a 50 percent match.
 - Each grant to non-profit organizations, local units of governments, or federally recognized Indian Tribes shall require a 25 percent match.
- Priority for grants given to nonprofit entities.

Publicly owned housing programs are eligible if they meet all the eligibility requirements.

Fire Sprinklers Buy Time. Time Buys Life.

How fire sprinklers save lives:

Rapid fire containment: Sprinklers activate immediately when they detect heat (not smoke), allowing them to control a fire before it spreads to other floors or areas.

Evacuation time: By quickly suppressing a fire, sprinklers provide occupants with valuable time to safely exit the building.

Reduced damage: Early fire suppression limits the extent of fire damage to the building and its contents.

Accessibility challenges: In high-rise buildings, reaching a fire with traditional firefighting methods can be difficult, making sprinklers even more critical.

Life safety concerns: Due to the potential for rapid fire spread in tall buildings, fire sprinklers are considered a vital life safety measure.



National Fire Sprinkler Association (NFSA)

Minnesota Chapter

Tom Brace brace@nfsa.org 651-644-7800

Sherry Munyon smunyon@capitolaccess.us 612-723-4245

3/4/2025



February 28, 2025

Representative Mohamud Noor
658 Cedar St. Floor 5
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Representative Noor:

Thank you again for addressing some of the hurdles that have been experienced in the current grant program for the retrofitting of residential high-rise buildings. This is a life safety issue for the occupants, residents, and first responders if or when a fire were to happen. This would also have an impact on the surrounding community due to these types of catastrophic fires in a high-rise building.

Amending the language to the current bill allows for broader accessibility to get these high-rises retrofitted with fire sprinklers and protection for all who occupy these types of buildings.

Sprinkler Fitters Local 417 represents those who install and maintain life safety fire protection systems throughout the state of Minnesota. We save lives and protect property every single day. We believe in our craft and strongly support HF 1334.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Trinidad J. Uribe III".

Trinidad J. Uribe III
Business Manager
Sprinkler Fitters Local 417
529 County Road E West
Shoreview, MN 55126
(Ph) 612-781-5804

TJU/tp opeiu #12



MINNESOTA PIPE TRADES ASSOCIATION
Affiliate of the United Association
Composed of Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry
Of the United States and Canada
State Federation of Labor – A.F.L.-C.I.O.

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Duluth-Detroit Lakes
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #11

Minneapolis-St. Cloud
Plumbers
Local #15

Minneapolis-St. Cloud
Pipefitters
Local #539

Minneapolis-St. Paul
Sprinkler Fitters
Local #417

Minneapolis
Gas Workers
Local #340

Moorhead
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #300

Rochester
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #6

St. Paul – Mankato
Plumbers
Local #34

St. Paul – Mankato
Pipefitters
Local #455

Virginia
Plumbers and Pipefitters
Local #589

Road Sprinkler Fitters
Central Region
Local #669

March 3, 2025

Honorable Chair Spencer Igo
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Igo:

The Minnesota Pipe Trades Association is proud to support H.F. 1334 and respectfully asks that all of the members of the Housing Finance and Policy Committee join you in passing this vital public safety legislation.

As you know, this bill supplements legislation passed previously in response to the tragic high-rise fire that killed five Minnesotans in November 2019.

The State Fire Marshal has testified that since 2004, there have been 65 fires in Minnesota that started on or above the 7th floor of a building, the vast majority of them being multi-family high-rise dwellings.

In cases where automatic fire-suppression sprinklers were present, all fires were quickly contained or extinguished.

Conversely, the Fire Marshal has concluded that the lack of an automatic sprinkler system in the apartment where the fire originated in November 2019 was a major factor in the deaths that occurred.

The State Fire Marshall Division Report on the Minneapolis High Rise Fire concluded:

It is the SFMD's position that all high-rise buildings should be protected with fire sprinkler systems. Had this building been protected with fire sprinklers, it is the opinion of the SFMD that no loss of life would have occurred.

In short, it is the universal opinion of fire-fighting professionals that automatic fire-suppression systems in high-rise buildings save lives.

It should also be noted that these types of fires are especially dangerous for fire fighters and first responders who are tasked to fight these fires and rescue victims trapped within them. Carrying fire-fighting and medical equipment up numerous flights of stairs into a flame and smoke filled building is a nightmare.

While H.F. 1334 does not require the installation of fire-suppression systems, the proposed grant increase would certainly offset the overall costs for a building owner to retro fit their property with one. This would be a tremendous benefit for the residents of the property, as well as the fire fighting professionals tasked with battling these fires.

We are pleased to join with other individuals and organizations in supporting this bill.

The tragic deaths that still occur in high-rise dwellings are avoidable. Installing automated fire-suppression systems is the way to avoid them. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew R. Campeau', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrew R. Campeau

President

Minnesota Pipe Trades Association