**LEECH LAKE BAND OF OJIBWE**

***Carri Jones****, Chairwoman*

***Arthur LaRose****, Secretary-Treasurer*

***Penny DeVault****, District I Representative*

***Steve White****, District II Representative*

***LeRoy Staples Fairbanks III****, District III Representative*

Oral Testimony by

Shannon K. Avery, Tribal Planner/Developer

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe

Before the

Health and Human Services Finance Committee

Minnesota House of Representatives

St. Paul, Minnesota

March 17, 2015

Good afternoon, Honorable Chair and Distinguished Members of the Health and Human Services Finance Committee. My name is Shannon K. Avery, Tribal Planner/Developer for the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. The Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee (RBC) District II Representative Steve White is also present. Mr. White is the founder of the Leech Lake Homeless Shelter. Mr. White wanted to express his personal support for H.F. 977 that addresses long-term homeless supportive services.

I am here to express the Leech Lake Reservation Business Committee’s support for H.F. 977, the bill that is presently before the Health and Human Services Finance Committee. A key part of this bill will address the long-term homeless supportive services concerns in the State of Minnesota.

The Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe has been experiencing a crisis with the number of families that are homeless – an issue we see continuing to grow with each passing year. In 2014, the Leech Lake Veteran’s Memorial Grounds had 100 people living in tents at the pow-wow camping area. The Ball Club Pow-Wow grounds had over 25 people living in tents as well. The Leech Lake RBC has been notified by Cass Lake-Bena High School officials that 78 children were homeless and the school was allowing the children a place to sleep and shower.

Presently, the Leech Lake Housing Authority has reported that 700 families are on the Leech Lake Housing Waiting List. The Leech Lake Housing Authority has also identified 450 people were surveyed as homeless by the Wilder Foundation Survey for Leech Lake in 2012. The Wilder Foundation Survey had also reported that 25% of those people defined as homeless are children. These are the facts and statistics Leech Lake has uncovered, but please consider all the unreported homeless families flying under the radar screen. Homelessness is an issue needing to be addressed.

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Honorable Chair, this completes my statement on behalf of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. I would be grateful to answer any questions from the honorable members on the Health and Human Services Finance Committee. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.