



March 16, 2022

Re: HF 4225 – Requiring all local governments to create policies regarding homeless encampments

Dear Chair Gomez and members of the House Preventing Homelessness Division:

The League of Minnesota Cities appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on behalf of our 837 member cities regarding HF 4225. Housing instability and homelessness is a growing concern in the State of Minnesota and in cities across the state. Providing solutions and adequate resources to address housing instability and homelessness is a goal that is shared by Minnesota cities and cities continue to work diligently to address this important issue.

Cities that have experienced unsheltered residents camping on public land have sought effective and humane policies to address health and safety concerns in encampments while continuing to deploy significant local resources to stably house unsheltered individuals. HF 4225 creates a number of questions and concerns for cities given the broad scope of the bill, primarily around the requirement that all cities across the state, regardless of if they have ever had a homeless encampment in their city, develop and adopt policies on homeless encampments. Cities adopt policies on specific issues impacting individual communities and the requirement that all cities adopt such a policy is overly broad in scope and may pose challenges for smaller communities where a policy on homeless encampments is not needed.

Additionally, while cities with existing standard operating procedures for homelessness encampments in many cases address the collection and storage of unclaimed property after an encampment is addressed, the parameters of the required policy raise concerns about the unfunded mandate for cities and potential liability for cities to collect and store unclaimed property and make a determination whether personal property has value or not. Moreover, the bill's requirement that city administration must consult with public health officials as well as state and local agencies prior to an emergency response to address a homeless encampment may hinder a city's ability to quickly and effectively address health, safety, and welfare issues of those in the encampment as well as the surrounding areas.

We appreciate the bill author's attention to this important policy issue and look forward to working with the bill author to look at ways we can encourage cities that have addressed homeless encampments to continue to do so effectively and humanely.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel Lightfoot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "D".

Daniel Lightfoot
Intergovernmental Relations Representative
League of Minnesota Cities