

December 9, 2020

Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka  
House Speaker Melissa Hortman  
*Via Electronic Delivery*

Re: Emergency Services Program Funding Cliff

Dear Majority Leader Gazelka and Speaker Hortman,

As providers of emergency shelter for individuals experiencing homelessness across the state, we urge you to act now to pass additional funding for the Emergency Services Program (ESP), which provides critical funding for emergency shelter and COVID-19 response operations.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency shelters have been working tirelessly on the frontlines to continue serving individuals experiencing homelessness safely and without interruption. This has come with significant costs as we strive to meet COVID-19 protocols to prevent the spread of the virus and as the economic impact of the pandemic drives more people to seek support.

We are grateful for the past action taken by the Legislature to provide emergency aid early in the pandemic. That funding, in addition to support from the federal CARES Act, has helped our shelters keep their doors open and serve those in need, but those dollars are quickly running out and soon expire, causing emergency shelters to face a significant funding cliff as we enter 2021 and the pandemic continues into the cold winter months.

The combination of these factors threatens to strain the state's shelter system beyond its capacity. More aid is needed to purchase PPE, to support the additional space necessary to shelter more individuals with proper social distancing, and to pay for increased staffing needs of emergency shelter workers, who are part of the healthcare system and have been serving on the frontline as first responders to the most vulnerable in our community throughout the pandemic.

Emergency shelters, in partnership with the state and local governments, have gone to great lengths to serve and protect thousands of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness, but this work is far from over, and there are still many more in need. While we continue to call on Congress for additional aid, we know a federal relief package will not come fast enough to avoid the funding cliff before us.

We urge you to act now and pass an additional \$10 million in funding for the Emergency Services Program to aid our state's emergency shelters while federal negotiations continue. With your continued support, we can ensure Minnesotans have a safe place to shelter from the cold and the pandemic while working towards stable housing.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Otteson, Executive Director  
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Ron Oleheiser, Executive Director  
Grace House of Itasca County

Tim Marx, President and CEO  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis

Julie Jeppson, Executive Director  
Stepping Stone Emergency Housing

Marti Maltby, Director  
Peace House Community

Trisha Kauffman, Executive Director  
Solid Ground

Cody J. Schuler, Executive Director  
Fargo-Moorhead Coalition to End Homelessness

Pastor Sue Koesterman, CEO  
Churches United for the Homeless

John Cole, Interim Executive Director  
Align Minneapolis

Beth Holger, Chief Executive Officer  
The Link

Lisa Mears, Executive Director  
The Bridge for Youth

Liz Richards Executive Director  
Violence Free Minnesota

David Fey, Interim Executive Director  
Our Saviour's Community Services

Paul Williams, President and CEO  
Project for Pride in Living, Inc.

Rena Oswald-Anderson, Interim Executive Director  
St. Stephen's Human Services

cc: Governor Tim Walz  
Senator Susan Kent  
Representative Ryan Winkler  
Representative Kurt Daudt  
Senator Michelle Benson  
Senator Jim Abeler  
Representative Tina Liebling  
Representative Mike Howard