

Representative Jennifer Schultz
House Human Services Finance Committee
State Office Building
473 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155



Representative Aisha Gomez
House Preventing Homelessness Division
State Office Building
529 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

February 2, 2020

Chair Gomez, Chair Schultz and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.F. 42, a bill that will help address the ongoing needs of individuals most at risk of homelessness or who are currently experiencing homelessness during this pandemic. We greatly appreciate your leadership on this issue to ensure all Minnesotans across our state have access to safe, dignified shelter and supportive housing services during this time of crisis.

Since the Homes for All coalition formed a decade ago, the statewide need for affordable housing and access to housing services across the continuum has only grown. We have increasing numbers of unhoused people around our state, thousands of workers cannot afford or find a stable home near their place of employment, and affordable homeownership is even further out of reach – especially for our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Our coalition has grown to 270+ organizations reaching every corner of the state and representing non-profits, direct service providers, faith communities, the private sector, local municipalities, and philanthropic organizations - all working in unison to amplify statewide affordable housing needs at the Capitol.

H.F. 42 would invest a total of \$17.5 million in one-time, emergency COVID-19 relief for the Emergency Services Program (ESP), isolation spaces, and a temporary rate increase for Housing Support. These critical investments would allow service providers in every corner of the state to continue providing life-saving emergency shelter, housing and supportive services to individuals in need—life-saving services which have also been instrumental in slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. These same investments would provide the needed resources to help ensure those most in need, including those with the lowest incomes, disabilities, youth, and increasingly Minnesota’s elders, are not left further behind as we navigate the coldest months of the pandemic.

Increasing resources for ESP to stabilize and enhance the capacity of our state’s emergency shelter system and strengthening Housing Support are top priorities of the Homes for All Coalition. Their importance has been made more urgent as a result of COVID-19, but their need will remain even after the pandemic has ended. In addition to supporting the one-time COVID-19 relief proposed in H.F. 42, we encourage you to pursue sustainable funding options to better equip our state to prevent and end homelessness and promote housing stability. This includes greater and ongoing investments in ESP (H.F. 315 - Howard) and Housing Support (H.F. 601 – Her).

A famous quote by Mahatmi Ghandi reads, “The true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.” Investments in ESP and Housing Support, both in the immediate and long-term, will lift not only our most vulnerable, they will also lift up every Minnesotan. Homes for All is grateful for your thoughtful consideration of this request and asks for your support.

We know that where we live impacts everything. Home is where children learn, workers earn and how communities thrive. The Homes for All coalition is available for any additional information to help inform your budgetary decisions. Please reach out to the policy co-chairs, Zack Eichten (651-829-0888), Michael Dahl (651-336-5902) or Kari Johnson (612-387-6398) should you need any further information regarding the specifics of the Homes for All budget requests.

Sincerely,

Pastor Sue Koesterman & Chad Adams
Homes for All Co-Chairs