



Legal Services Advocacy Project

March 19, 2024

The Honorable Jamie Becker-Finn
Chair, Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
559 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Peggy Scott
Republican Lead, Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
335 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Becker-Finn, Lead Scott, and Members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

Legal Aid provides civil legal services to low-income Minnesotans, Minnesotans with disabilities, and elder Minnesotans, statewide, to help them meet their basic needs. Legal Aid writes to support the inclusion of the following provisions in HF 3591, the Omnibus Landlord-Tenant Policy Package:

- HF 3810 – Right of a Survivor of Domestic Violence to Break a Lease (amending Minn. Stat. § 504B.206);
- HF 3845 – Legal Aid’s Technical Bill, containing changes to:
 - the Early Renewal statute (amending Minn. Stat. § 504B.144);
 - the Late Fees statute (amending Minn. Stat. § 504B.177);
 - the statute governing service of summons and complaint (adding Minn. Stat. § 504B.332);
 - the Judgment and Execution statute (amending Minn. Stat. § 504B.345);
- HF 3917 – clarifying the right of persons with mental illness to call for police or emergency assistance (amending Minn. Stat. § 504B.205)
- HF 3961 – addressing the Identity Dinkytown issue of the failure of an owner of a newly constructed building to deliver possession on the date promised in the lease (adding Minn. Stat. § 504B.153); and
- HF 3843 – allowing prospective tenants to provide ITINs on rental applications (adding Minn. Stat. § 504B.117).

These provisions, as well as several others in the package, will make important clarifications and improvements to landlord-tenant law and benefit tenants across Minnesota.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views of the Omnibus Landlord-Tenant Policy Package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Elwood".

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney

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March 18, 2024

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

Housing has long been a top concern of NAMI Minnesota members. A lack of safe and affordable housing is one of the most powerful barriers to recovery. When this basic need isn't met, people cycle in and out of homelessness, jails, shelters, and hospitals. That's especially evident in Minnesota, where we are in the midst of an unprecedented housing crisis.

NAMI Minnesota supports the tenants' rights omnibus bill, HF3591. Ensuring Minnesotans have full legal protections applying for and staying in their homes is one of the best ways to prevent homelessness and provide the stability and security Minnesotans with mental illnesses need for their recovery.

In particular, we urge you to support Article 1, Sections 5-6, protecting tenants' right to call for emergency assistance in response to a mental health crisis. NAMI Minnesota has received several calls about families who were evicted from their homes for calling 911. Then, through a report from the Department of Justice, we learned the City of Anoka shared information about the mental illnesses and medications of tenants who had called 911 during a mental health emergency with their landlords and pressured those landlords to evict their tenants under threat of losing their rental license. No one - ever - should be afraid to call for help during a crisis because they might lose their housing.

Other policies in the bill we especially support include Article 5, Section 13, requiring landlords to make an effort to fill a unit a tenant vacates during the lease term. This would be helpful to people who experience mental health crises that require inpatient care. The last thing a person in crisis needs to worry about is rent for a home they are no longer able to live in.

We also support Article 5, Sections 34-36, establishing penalties for landlords who ban pets from subsidized and accessible housing units. A trained and certified psychiatric service dog costs between \$20,000 and \$30,000, a prohibitive price for most, especially those in subsidized housing. Many people with mental illnesses instead keep emotional support animals, which are often legally classified as "pets." They are necessary for the recovery and wellbeing of many people with mental illnesses and should be protected as such.

Thank you, Representatives Agbaje, Hussein, and Gomez for carrying this important bill. Thank you, Judiciary Committee for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

Sarah Knispel, MSW
Public Policy Coordinator

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Jamie Becker-Finn, Chair
Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
Minnesota Housing of Representatives
559 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Peggy Scott, Republican Lead
Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee
Minnesota Housing of Representatives
335 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: House File 3591

Dear Chair Becker-Finn, Lead Scott, and Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

The Minnesota Chapter of the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (Minnesota NAHRO) is comprised of 150 housing authorities which provide affordable housing and rental assistance to more than 60,000 Minnesotan households. Minnesota NAHRO writes in general support of HF 3591 and the DE4 amendment. There are a few provisions of the bill which concern our member agencies as identified below.

504B.173, Subd. 3a. Denial Based on Pending Cases, beginning on line 10.5 of HF3591DE4. Housing authorities conduct resident screening and provide applicants the opportunity to explain any history that may cause concern. There is likely to result in requiring housing authorities and other housing providers to accept applicants with histories of violence with the potential to endanger other residents.

504B.231 Damages for Ouster, beginning on line 28.18 of HF3591DE4. Minnesota NAHRO requests that “unlawfully and in bad faith” remain in paragraph (a), where deleted in line 28.21. If a tenant appears to have abandoned a dwelling unit, housing authorities move them out of the system and change the locks. Housing authorities and housing providers do not want someone returning to the units weeks later, suing us for an honest mistake on ouster.

504B.276 Limitations on Claim Preclusion, beginning on line 30.20 of HF3591DE4. Minnesota NAHRO believes this provision to be in direct opposition to established case law on how civil claims are litigated. If passed, this would allow residential tenants to repeatedly sue the housing authority or their housing provider over the same set of facts at issue. There is no other area of law with the privilege to repeatedly sue over the same core facts at issue after a judgment has been reached.

Sincerely,


Melissa Taphorn

Legislative Committee Chair and Board Member



3/21/24

Dear Chair Becker-Finn, and Members of the Committee,

The Equity in Place coalition is writing to express our strong support for Representative Agbaje's HF 3591, which would grant tenants across the state the affirmative right to organize for the stability, safety, and dignity of their homes.

Equity in Place is a diverse group of strategic partners from organizations led by people of color and housing advocacy organizations. We believe that everyone in Minnesota deserves to live where they want to live and have access to opportunity.

We are writing in support of HF 3591, more specifically we support the inclusion of the following provision into HF 3591.

HF 2704 - Tenant Right to Organize

HF 3843 - Expanding the use of ITIN for Rental Applications

These provisions as well as others in this package would have a huge impact on all tenants across the State of Minnesota and will lead us to a more sustainable and justice Housing Ecosystem.

Equity in Place urges you to vote YES on HF 3591. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

African Career, Education and Resource Inc (ACER)
The Alliance
Center for Urban & Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota
CloseKnit
Community Stabilization Project
COPAL MN
Harrison Neighborhood Association
Hope Community
Housing Justice Center
HOME Line
Jewish Community Action
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers
MN STEP (Standing Together to End Poverty)
Minnesota Youth Collective
Native American Community Development Institute
New American Development Center
Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association
Pueblos de Lucha y Esperanza
Urban Homeworks
West Side Community Organization