



**Testimony of Mr. Ryan E. Hamilton, Esq.**  
**Minnesota House of Representatives Human Services Finance and Policy Committee**  
**H.F. 3294 (Reyer), March 10, 2022**

Chair Schultz and Members of the Committee:

We are all called to shelter the homeless. Despite many charities living out this corporal work of mercy, the need continues to grow. Our partners at Catholic Charities Twin Cities tell us the number of people living without shelter in the Twin Cities continues to increase.

It has become evident that charity alone is not enough to meet this need. Thus, the Minnesota Catholic Conference (MCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Minnesota, supports H.F. 3294—legislation that would appropriate \$35,000,000 in fiscal year 2023 for emergency services grants and set the base appropriation at \$30,000,000 for the following two fiscal years.

A basic moral test for society is measuring how we treat the most vulnerable in our midst. In a society with a growing gap between rich and poor, weak and strong, the Bible gives us the story of the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46), and reminds us that we will all be judged by our response to the “least among us.”

Across Minnesota, far too many people are left to survive in conditions and places that are not suitable for living with dignity. No one should be unable to access a safe, warm, and dignified place to seek shelter. This is especially true for those who find themselves in an emergency. We cannot continue to tolerate the status quo of people sheltering in their cars, on public transit, in public bathrooms, under bridges, and other places that undermine their dignity and put their lives at risk, especially in our extreme weather.

Without proper resources, organizations that provide emergency shelters to the homeless are forced to turn people in need away. The appropriation to the Emergency Services Program (ESP) is currently the state’s only investment that provides supplemental resources to Minnesota’s shelter providers. Increased and stable state funding for ESP will help shelter providers like Catholic Charities continue to respond to our state’s ongoing homelessness crisis.