

February 3, 2021

Representative Mike Howard

Minnesota House of Representatives
451 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Melissa Wiklund

Minnesota Senate
95 University Avenue West, Room 2227
St. Paul, MN 55155

RE: [HF42/SF468](#) COVID-19; emergency service, isolation spaces, and housing support funding provided; and money appropriated.

Dear Representative Howard and Senator Wiklund,

We write today in support of additional funding for emergency services in Minnesota. We can attest to the ongoing risk of the Covid-19 pandemic for our patients and clients experiencing homelessness as well as speak to the importance of the interventions being taken by shelters to prevent illness and spread.

We know that those experiencing homelessness are at the highest vulnerability for contracting Covid-19, spreading it to others, have poor outcomes from becoming sick, and are more likely to have co-occurring chronic diseases that are of concern during this pandemic. Most of the people we serve through the Healthcare for the Homeless (HCH) clinic are living/sleeping in congregate settings - such as shelters, encampments, or public transit – and our clients cannot follow a “stay-at-home” order to prevent illness or to isolate when sick.

The steady work of shelter providers to mitigate the risks of Covid-19 have made a significant difference. During this pandemic, shelter providers have stepped up to provide more services when other community resources have closed or altered their services (for examples, libraries and other public spaces that have temporarily shut down). In collaboration with public health officials, shelter staff have worked to implement cleaning procedures and redesign spaces for social distancing. HCH has been collaborating with shelter sites to perform mass testing and case surveillance in congregant settings. Adults who are elderly and/or most medically vulnerable have been moved into hotel rooms. These interventions have saved lives.

This work has required resources above what shelters normally need to operate, and increasing these funds are a necessity as the pandemic continues. We thank you for your support for emergency funds for shelter so far and we urge your ongoing support.

Sincerely,



Marion Greene
Board Chair
Hennepin County Board of Commissioners



Jennifer DeCubellis
Chief Executive Officer
Hennepin Healthcare System