

March 23, 2023

Representative Jamie Becker-Finn
Chair of the Committee on Judiciary Finance and Civil Law

RE: **HF 917— Agbaje:** Housing; discrimination based on participation in public assistance prohibited, pet declawing and devocalization prohibited, fees prohibited, inspections required, notice provided, penalties provided, right to counsel provided, lease covenants and repairs in residential tenancy provided, renewal and termination of lease provided, residential evictions provided, and expungement provided.

Dear Chair Becker-Finn and Members,

Safe, secure and sustained affordable housing is a critical foundation for stability in all other areas of life, such as employment, education, and health. Access to affordable housing is vital for the wellbeing of all residents of Minneapolis. It is critical that barriers to securing stable and affordable housing are overcome. Recognizing that an individual's housing needs may change over time or due to circumstance, all parts of the housing continuum are important to maintain, invest in and support. It's also important for property owners to maintain rental homes in safe and healthy conditions for tenants and for there to be fair business practices in rental housing.

Minneapolis is home to more than 90,000 renter households, a number that continues to grow every year. Because this makes up over half (53%) of the City's total households, it is critical that residents and families who rent their homes have the rights, resources, and information they need. To protect our most vulnerable residents and allow access to needed healthcare, tenants must be allowed to break their lease, with a 2-month notice, if they must move to a medically-assisted or accessible housing unit.

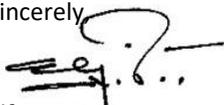
Minnesota law states that landlords must give tenants "reasonable notice" to enter their apartments for non-emergency reasons. A 24-hour notice from a landlord, at a minimum, is necessary, appropriate, and reasonable— especially before entering a tenant's home. In addition, an expansion of emergency issues beyond what is listed in state law is needed to allow an expedited process for renters to enforce their right to a safe home.

The City also supports the efforts included in this bill to make eviction court processes more fair. Minneapolis has a right to counsel policy, ensuring that low-income residents facing eviction have the legal representation they need to support them through the court process. Renters who are represented in eviction court are more likely to maintain housing stability than those who don't have a lawyer. The City supports expanding this right to other renters throughout Minnesota, especially those residing in public housing. The provisions to make the court process itself more fair would improve housing stability outcomes for Minneapolis residents.

Lastly, establishing a source of income protection for renters is important, as we know that discrimination occurs when a landlord refuses to rent to a housing applicant because of a person's form of income - housing assistance. Source of income protection would increase access to housing and freedom of housing choice as well as increase the usage of rental assistance, a scarce and valuable resource.

These tenant protection bills will positively benefit renters not only in the City of Minneapolis, but across the state. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of these important pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,



Elfric K. Porte, II.
Director, Housing Policy & Development
Community Planning and Economic Development
City of Minneapolis