



Legal Services Advocacy Project
970 Raymond Avenue, Suite G-40
St. Paul, MN 55114

February 19, 2022

The Honorable Michael Howard
Chair, Housing Finance & Policy Comm.
Minnesota House of Representatives
473 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Brian Johnson
Republican Lead, Housing Finance & Policy Comm.
Minnesota House of Representatives
243 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: HF 1696 – Rental Housing Assistance and Risk Mitigation Programs

Dear Chair Howard, Lead Johnson, and Members of the Housing Finance and Policy Committee:

Legal Aid writes to express its support for HF 1696, which would establish a rental assistance program for persons with a mental illness seeking to rent and a risk mitigation program for landlords who rent to persons eligible for existing state programs to provide services to persons with a mental illness or who are experiencing homelessness.

Legal Aid’s Minnesota Disability Law Center – the state’s federally designated “Protection and Advocacy” organization charged with advocating for the rights of Minnesotans with disabilities – and Legal Aid’s housing attorneys regularly represent and advise with clients with mental illnesses. And, Legal Aid attorneys across the state help Minnesotans experiencing homeless with legal problems, including those relating to housing. Housing stability is critical for all low-income Minnesotans, but it is especially important for persons who are living their lives with a mental illness and those experiencing or who recently experienced homelessness. HF 1696 would help those Legal Aid clients – and all similarly situated Minnesotans – to secure stable housing.

Providing an incentive to rent to persons who otherwise might be passed over as an applicant for housing is a wise investment of state dollars. The costs of housing instability are borne by society in many ways and creating programs to provide assistance and risk mitigation upstream can avoid higher state and societal costs later on.

Thank you for allowing Legal Aid to share its support for HF 1696. We urge its inclusion in the final funding package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ron Elwood".

Ron Elwood
Supervising Attorney

Cc: The Honorable Matt Norris