



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Twin Cities

Catholic Charities at Elliot Park
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January 18, 2023

Chair Mohamud Noor
House Human Services Finance Committee

Chair Noor and Members of the Human Services Finance Committee,

On behalf of Catholic Charities Twin Cities, I write to offer our strong support for **HF444, the Pathway Home Act**, and thank Representative Keeler for her leadership on this important issue.

Catholic Charities is a regional leader of housing, emergency shelter and direct services, serving more than 20,000 youth and adults annually. More than 10,000 of these individuals seek services through our overnight emergency shelters and day service centers, where staff provide hot meals, daily essentials, connections to more permanent housing, finance and employment resources, and more. Providing these services requires a skilled, dedicated workforce to meet individuals where they are, with trauma-informed care that supports and helps them navigate a path toward housing stability.

Unfortunately, public funding currently pays for less than 5% of operating expenses for these daytime shelter services—an unsustainable trend that has continued throughout the pandemic while demand for our services has significantly increased. The impacts of the pandemic, inflation and workforce shortages have escalated funding challenges even more, seriously threatening the financial stability of emergency shelter providers like us that serve as the State's safety net.

The ongoing, increased state investments to the **Emergency Services Grant Program (ESP)** and **Homeless Youth Act (HYA)** proposed in HF444 would help stabilize our state's emergency shelter system and scale services to better respond to Minnesota's homelessness crisis. As the state's most flexible funding sources for youth and adults experiencing homelessness, ESP and HYA can support operations and services like housing navigators, medical and mental health help, employment counseling and job placements, transportation and more, as well as the shelter workforce behind them.

Catholic Charities also supports Representative Feist's **HF135**, which complements the Pathway Home Act by providing one-time funding to continue **expanded shelter operations and diversion programs in Hennepin County** that are accelerating positive outcomes for individuals who are working to achieve stable housing. These programs were launched during the pandemic to respond to the critical needs facing our community, but they now face a funding cliff that threatens to close services while hundreds of vulnerable individuals remain in need.

More than ever before, our state has an opportunity to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring; but it requires bold investments like those in HF444 and HF135. We ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Lorna Schmidt

Director, Public Policy & Advocacy

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.