



February 22, 2022

Representative Aisha Gomez, Chair, Preventing Homelessness Division
Representative Neu Brindley, Lead, Preventing Homelessness Division
Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN

Dear Chair Gomez and Lead Neu Brindley,

As the President and CEO of the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, I write to express our support of HF3599 and HF3661 to, among other things, expand the trauma-informed services for survivors of sex trafficking, and to prevent sex trafficking by ensuring supportive, safe, and accessible housing for youth who may be vulnerable to trafficking. Thank you to Representative Keeler for authoring these important bills and to all members who are co-sponsors.

For 38 years, the Women's Foundation has invested more than \$32 million in community investments across the state, and advanced policy to create a state where women, girls, and their families thrive. Our commitment to systems-level change centering communities extends from our historic investments in MN Girls Are Not For Sale, to the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota, and continues today with investments in research and policy change. We have been proud to work with partners across the state to continue the efforts to combat sex trafficking in Minnesota. Our nation-leading enactment of the Safe Harbor Law in Minnesota is the foundation of preventing and addressing sex trafficking, with particular emphasis on providing support to the women and girls who are the primary targets and survivors of this terrible crime.


With the Center on Women, Gender, & Public Policy at the Humphrey School, we produce the state's leading research on the well-being of women and girls every two years. That data tells us that trafficking is still all too common and it impacts communities across the state. When we disaggregate the data, communities disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation include intersections of race, gender, place, and additional identities. The data also shows us where we must invest in community-led solutions – including in our juvenile corrections facilities, foster care system, and at school. We support both bills' additional funding for research. HF3599's prevalence study on trafficking and HF3661 study on homelessness among pregnant and parenting youth will provide salient data to create real solutions *with* those most impacted.

In addition, the bill's expanded funding for services for trafficking survivors – especially trauma-based and culturally relevant services – is needed across the state. Trafficking is not an issue that is limited by zip code in Minnesota, which is why the Safe Harbor Law established the network of navigators and shelters across the state. Still, there are far too many survivors of trafficking who need access to the places and services where they can heal. We need to take steps to provide necessary resources.

The Women's Foundation believes we also need to focus on preventing trafficking across Minnesota. Creating safe, supportive, and accessible housing for youth who are without stable homes or could become homeless will limit one of traffickers' tools - the promise of shelter - to lure youth into trafficking and harm. The resources in HF3661 are essential to building the safe places we need across Minnesota.

Sexual exploitation has no place in Minnesota. Because sexual violence begins early and has lifelong consequences, we can do so much more to protect and support our young people. By providing safe, accessible, and culturally responsive options, we can prevent this abuse and treat survivors with the healing and justice they deserve. We urge you to act on HF3599 and HF3661 to make Minnesota a place where women, girls, and gender-expansive people from all zip codes and backgrounds can thrive.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gloria Perez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gloria Perez
CEO/President
Women's Foundation of Minnesota