Representative Aisha Gomez

Chair, Preventing Homelessness Division

503 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 11, 2022

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of our communities across the city of Minneapolis, we are writing to you as concerned individuals in support HF 4225 in support of homeless encampment policies required by local governments before your committee. We believe first and foremost in the humanity of our unsheltered neighbors, and recognize the time is now for our local governments to develop strategic and coordinated policies addressing homeless encampments.

Currently, the City of Minneapolis has no policy regarding homeless encampments, leading to year after year development of new homeless encampments, and ongoing displacement of unhoused individuals and families with unpredictable and harmful evictions. In March 2020, the Centers for Disease Control issued guidance calling for a pause on the clearing of homeless encampments, unless individual housing units were available. Issuing eviction notices and clearing encampments cuts unhoused individuals off from critical and life saving services, perpetuates harmful displacement, and increases the spread Covid-19. A recent report on encampments published by the Department of Housing and Urban Development showed managing and sweeping away encampments comes with a significant financial cost to the city and to taxpayers, while not actually addressing the issue of homelessness. **All best practice recommendations point to bringing coordinated services to encampments rather than dispersing residents into the community to seek shelter elsewhere.**

The solution to homelessness is affordable housing. Encampments are a result of a deeply unaffordable and underinvested in housing system, a profound lack of understanding and care for low-income individuals and families and a fractured health system. We urgently deserve a thoughtful and strategic plan to address encampments.

With respect,

Concerned residents and constituents in Minneapolis