

February 2, 2021

Chair Aisha Gomez
Members of the Preventing Homelessness Division
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Support of House File 42

Dear Chair Gomez and Members of the Preventing Homelessness Division,

The mission of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless is to generate policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless works to ensure statewide housing stability and economic security. With 100 member organizations across Minnesota, we work to advance solutions that result in housing stability for all Minnesotans.

We urge you to act now to pass additional funding in HF42:

- Emergency Services Program (ESP) which provides critical funding for emergency shelter and COVID-19 response operations;
- Housing Support to keep stably housed people in housing;
- Isolation Space Funding to reduce the spread of COVID-19;

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency shelters have been working tirelessly on the frontlines to continue serving individuals experiencing homelessness safely and without interruption. This has come with significant costs as providers strive to meet COVID-19 protocols to prevent the spread of the virus. *However, those dollars are quickly running out, causing emergency shelters to face a significant funding cliff as the pandemic continues into the cold winter months.* The combination of these factors threatens to strain the state's shelter system beyond its capacity. More aid is needed to purchase PPE, to support the additional space necessary to shelter more individuals with proper social distancing, and to pay for increased staffing needs of emergency shelter workers.

Emergency shelters, in partnership with the state and local governments, have gone to great lengths to serve and protect thousands of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness. This work is far from over, and there are still many more children, adults, and families in need. While we continue to call on Congress for additional aid, we know a Federal relief package is unlikely to come fast enough to avoid the funding cliff before us.

We urge you to act now and pass an additional \$9 million in COVID-19 response funding for the Emergency Services Program to aid our state's emergency shelters along with the provisions on Housing Support and Isolation Spaces included in House File 42. We know: Shelter saves lives. Housing ends homelessness. With the leadership of the Legislature, we can ensure that every Minnesotan has a safe space indoors during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Rhonda Otteson, Executive Director