



# Evergreen

## Youth & Family Services

*Strengthening Youth. Preserving Families.*

March 10, 2022

To: Members of the Senate Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee

RE: Homeless Youth Act 2022 SF 3263-HF 3661

Dear Chair Abeler and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to share Evergreen Youth & Family Service's support of SF3263. For over 40 years, Evergreen has been at the forefront of providing support for youth and families in northern Minnesota. Our mission is to strengthen youth, preserve families and build relationships with an emphasis on those living in Northern Minnesota. Increasing the investment in the Homeless Youth Act will help Evergreen to strengthen the programs that are so vital to youth experiencing homelessness right in our communities.

An estimated 5,800 minors (10-17) and 7,500 young adults between the ages of 18–24 will experience homelessness over the course of one year in Minnesota. That means 13,300 Minnesota youth will be without homes this year, and the real number is likely higher because youth experiencing homelessness are the most invisible and the most vulnerable. Also, due to several factors, the number of Minnesota youth who are homeless on their own has continued to increase and is estimated at 4,876 youth on any given night.

In addition to those staggering numbers, more than half of Minnesotan adults experiencing homelessness reported first becoming homeless by age 24, and 36% first became homeless at or before age 18. Minnesota can do better for our young people, and increased investments in the Homeless Youth Act is a key part of the solution:

- The Homeless Youth Act continuum serves youth through street outreach, drop-in centers, shelter, transitional and supportive housing.
- State investments have supported expansion in access for youth statewide – knowing that youth are best served when close to home.
- Homeless Youth Act funds have leveraged additional philanthropic, federal, and county investments in serving youth throughout Minnesota.
- Innovation in employment, housing, and community partnerships have contributed to significant learning and gains in services for youth.

Evergreen provides essential services for youth from 15 different counties. We provide a Youth Crisis Shelter & Family Support, youth housing resources, and additional services in our Drop In Center to homeless youth to help them with basic needs, life skills, job placement, graduation, driver's education, a sense of belonging and a place of connection. We wrap around youth and give them a safe place to

start again and to grow. We are committed to serving each youth's individual needs and giving them hope for a better life.

At Evergreen and in the communities, we serve, we are thankful for the investments made over the past decade supporting programming and services for youth throughout the state, however, additional funding is vital to provide more access and to continue this work. Please support SF3263 and increase your investment in the Homeless Youth Act. This is critical to our youth and our communities. Thank you, again, for giving us this opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ebony Warren". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ebony" being more prominent than the last name "Warren".

Ebony Warren  
Executive Director  
218-751-8223  
ewarren@evergreenyfs.org