



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
of St. Paul and Minneapolis

1200 Second Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55403
612-204-8500
cctwincities.org

April 14, 2021

Representative Rena Moran, Chair, House Ways & Means Committee
Representative Jennifer Schultz, Chair, Human Services Finance & Policy Committee
Representative Tina Lieblich, Chair, Health Finance & Policy Committee

Re: HHS Omnibus Bill – Homelessness & Housing Stability

Chair Moran, Chair Schultz and Chair Lieblich:

As an emergency shelter, housing and direct services provider supporting more than 23,000 men, women, children and families each year, Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis thanks you for prioritizing investments in homelessness and housing stability as part of the Health and Human Services Omnibus bill.

Emergency shelters have been working tirelessly on the frontlines since before the pandemic to respond to our state's housing and homelessness crisis, providing safety net services to those most in need. The need for these services will remain long after COVID-19 has gone.

Your actions to prioritize funding for the **Emergency Services Program (ESP)** with an ongoing investment of \$9 million per year will fill a critical gap in public funding for our state's emergency shelter system, providing the resources needed to strengthen and stabilize shelter operations, while also giving flexibility to pursue locally driven solutions to the homelessness crisis. This investment will save lives.

Housing is healthcare, and just as emergency shelters play an essential role in assisting those in crisis, so too does Housing Support play an essential role in creating pathways to stable housing.

We thank you for prioritizing policy updates to extend **Housing Support absence requirements** for individuals seeking healthcare treatment. Housing Support recipients are currently limited to 18-day absences before losing their housing benefit. For those requiring hospitalization for chronic medical conditions or longer-term substance use or mental health treatment, this forces them to choose between their apartment key or their health. Your actions today will ensure tenants have the peace of mind knowing they can get the treatment they need and still have a home to return to after.

As negotiations continue, we hope you will continue to seek opportunities to also increase **base rate funding for Housing Support**, as proposed in Representative Her's HF601. This proposal has strong bipartisan support and complements the increased investments in emergency shelter, allowing housing support providers to work directly with private market landlords across the state to create more pathways to stable housing. With its focus on community settings—those places where individuals have their own lease—it represents a unique public-private partnership serving nearly 5,000 individuals at-risk of homelessness, with the potential to serve more in all regions of the state.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the systemic inequities that exist in our housing and healthcare systems, and sustainable state investments to the programs above are necessary to support a more equitable response to our housing and homelessness crisis. We look forward to working with you to advance these provisions and to seek additional opportunities to build upon them as budget negotiations continue.

Sincerely,



Wendy Underwood
Vice President, Social Justice Advocacy & Engagement
wendy.underwood@cctwincities.org



Lorna Schmidt
Public Policy Manager
lorna.schmidt@cctwincities.org

cc:

Speaker Melissa Hortman
Majority Leader Ryan Winkler
Representative Kaohly Her
Representative Mike Howard
Representative Aisha Gomez