



220 E Hickory Street, Mankato, Minnesota

March 8, 2022

Dear Chair Abeler and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to express our support for SF3140 regarding Shelter Capital Funding, which will come before you this week. Connections Shelter is a faith-based organization which operates a seasonal emergency shelter for all genders and all types of families in the Mankato area. We are currently in our fifth season of shelter, and have a 35 bed shelter, which operates out of the second floor of First Presbyterian Church. For the first time this year, we consistently had a full waiting list for shelter beds with over 113 individuals and families on the list. We also know that the need for shelter beds does not decrease in the months that our shelter is not open. Many people sleep outside in our area during the shelter off-season, and many more hop to other communities for a few months, then return to Mankato when the shelter re-opens.

We are developing plans right now for a new facility, open within the next 2-3 years, which would increase the number of shelter beds from 35 to 50 and be open year round. This dedicated building for our work would also enable us to do better outreach to homeless individuals not yet in shelter and to continue case management services for those who have recently left shelter. It would also give us room to provide more community-building and support groups, and have space for our partners at Open Door Health Clinic and Southern Minnesota Food Recovery to tend to the food and medical needs of those with unstable housing.

We envision a space where a person's holistic needs could be met all at once: hot meals, showers and laundry, safe shelter and case management, mental health and substance abuse support groups, a listening ear and connection to community resources. From our experience in our current setting and in listening deeply to those who are experiencing homelessness, we know that this kind of holistic support can often be the difference between becoming and staying housed or bouncing in and out of homelessness.

By supporting SF3140, you are supporting shelters across the state that serve this underserved and growing population. With a small portion of this funding, Connections can build a new facility that allows us to meet the growing demands for shelter.

Thank you for your support,

Pastor Erica Koser
Co-Shelter Director

Pastor Collette Broady Grund
Co-Shelter Director

