



Get Help: 612.825.0000
Give Help: 612.825.3333
tubman.org

March 29, 2022
Chair Eric Pratt
95 University Ave W.
Minnesota Senate Building, Room 3219
St. Paul, MN 55155

Tubman Chrysalis Center
4432 Chicago Ave S
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Harriet Tubman Center East
1725 Monastery Way
Maplewood, MN 55109

Dear Chair Pratt and Senate Jobs and Economic Growth Committee Members,

Tubman is the largest provider of domestic violence services of its kind in Minnesota, serving nearly 25,000 clients annually who are facing violence, exploitation, homelessness, addiction or mental health challenges, and other forms of trauma. Our mission is to advance opportunities for change so that every person can experience safety, hope, and healing.

On March 30, your committee is hearing the Governor's budget proposal, which includes a \$50 million nonprofit relief fund. We ask that you go beyond that recommendation and instead support **Senator Nelson's bill for a \$200 million Nonprofit Relief Fund (SF3593)**. This legislation would provide vital support for the nonprofit sector, and organizations like ours, following two years of a pandemic with unpredictable funding streams and increased demand in services. Since the pandemic, we have seen our clients experience higher levels of crisis and our demand for services has increased as a result. Despite these challenges, Tubman has continued to provide essential services for clients in crisis. Our 24/7 crisis line, shelter, and youth transitional housing remained open. Legal advocacy and attorney services for victims of domestic violence continue, primarily through technology. Staff and volunteer attorneys represent clients at court hearings. We provide mental and chemical health services via telehealth, but some clients find technology difficult or have privacy concerns.

As a result, we continue to face higher operating costs to keep clients and staff safe due to COVID-19. Some of these include:

- Temporary staff, more overtime, and pandemic pay for shelter staff, as we maintain safe staffing levels while some staff need leaves due to health conditions, care for elderly family members, or lack of day care.
- Costs of personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies.
- Increased costs for meals in shelter.
- Additional supports, both in direct funding and resources, for clients experiencing increased challenges due to the pandemic such as health concerns, job disruption, child care, transportation needs, and housing instability.
- Telehealth platforms and technology needs for client services and staff communications were purchased.
- Technology platform costs for both clients and volunteer attorneys needed to participate in remote court settings.
- Increased costs associated to meet the needs of increase in direct representation in court for our clients, as well as rise in amount of law clinics we conducted to provide legal advice for clients representing themselves.

- Increased demand for Safe at Home applications, which by statute are required to be conducted in person, which as a result many agencies stopped offering this assistance, and our agency then received an influx of requests, requiring additional resources of and by our staff.

A Nonprofit Relief Fund would provide one-time grants to eligible nonprofits like ours, which would allow us to fund crucial needs such as: window replacement in our residential tower at Harriet Tubman Center East, which provides a COVID mitigation strategy, hire additional temporary staff to keep up with the increased demand for legal services and shelter services, increased funding for direct client assistance, as well as stipends to pay interns in a challenging hiring market, with decreased numbers of job applicants.

Nonprofits have largely been left out state and federal relief funds throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Tubman, like many nonprofits, have stepped up to fill in the gaps in communities across the state of Minnesota. A Nonprofit Relief Fund would contribute to our financial stability so we can continue to provide essential services to residents in our communities.

Tubman believes that the resources available in this legislative session should be used to respond to the ongoing health and economic impacts of the pandemic, address long-standing disparities and areas of disinvestment, and build a stronger, more equitable recovery. In particular, we support policies that work toward supporting and rebuilding a thriving and more equitable nonprofit sector, which allows us and other organizations to serve our communities in need of safety, hope, and healing.

If you have any questions, please contact Jen Polzin, CEO, at Tubman at 612-767-6697 or jpolzin@tubman.org. Thank you for your continuing collaboration as we work together to serve your community and the communities of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer J. Polzin".

Jennifer J. Polzin
CEO