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January 30, 2023

Chair Wiklund  
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

Dear Chair Wiklund and members of the Health & Human Services Committee,

Please support SF388. Please take this positive step toward alleviating unsheltered homelessness. I have worked in the field of transitional and emergency housing for 20 years and have seen more and more individuals and families lose their homes and stability over this time. We know that shelter and housing saves lives. Please review these three elements in the legislation and fully support this vital bill:

#### **\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities**

While MCH is advocating for \$200 million in funding, we are very pleased with \$150 million being included in SF388. Unfortunately, according to the Homelessness Management Information System, 80 of our 87 counties have either no shelter beds or lack enough shelter beds to meet the need. MCH completed a statewide survey to gauge the needed state resources to build, acquire, or renovate shelters to meet the need. We've identified nearly \$200 million in capital needs statewide that would create or preserve over 3,400 shelter spaces. Every region in the state needs access to additional shelter spaces, and this statewide funding source would provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the need such as those that are culturally responsive, gender affirming, accessible, and are low barrier; shelter is the first step to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

#### **\$40 million in 2024/25 and \$70 million in 2026/27 for the Emergency Services Program (ESP)**

We are thrilled that SF388 includes our full request for ESP. This funding will allow organizations and local communities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supporting shelters, outreach, motel vouchers, and other key resources and services. This increase will be key to supporting both new and existing shelters in providing services to people experiencing homelessness.

#### **\$9 million for the Transitional Housing Program (THP)**

Along with responding to our unsheltered homelessness crisis, SF388 includes funding for THP which is vital for many individuals and families leaving shelter. THP helps individuals and families obtain stable housing where they can develop good rental history while finding a permanent housing destination.

In addition to the above priorities, MCH supports the remaining items included in SF388:

- **Homeless Management Information System**
- **Homeless Youth Act**
- **Homeless youth; chosen family grants**

We applaud the leadership for bringing this bill forward. Shelter and housing save lives!

Sincerely,

**Wendy Darst**

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