



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Twin Cities

Catholic Charities at Elliot Park
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January 31, 2023

Chair Melissa Wiklund
Senate Health & Human Services Committee

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Catholic Charities Twin Cities, I write to offer our strong support for **SF388, a bill to increase public investments in the emergency shelter system**, and thank Senator Dibble for his leadership on this important issue.

Catholic Charities is a regional leader of housing, emergency shelter and direct services, serving more than 20,000 youth and adults annually. More than 10,000 of these individuals seek services through our overnight emergency shelters and day service centers, where staff provide hot meals, daily essentials, connections to more permanent housing, finance and employment resources, and more. Providing these services requires a skilled, dedicated workforce to meet individuals where they are, with trauma-informed care that supports and helps them navigate a path toward housing stability.

Unfortunately, public funding currently pays for less than 5% of operating expenses for these daytime shelter services—an unsustainable trend that has continued throughout the pandemic while demand for our services has significantly increased. The impacts of the pandemic, inflation and workforce shortages have escalated funding challenges even more, seriously threatening the financial stability of emergency shelter providers like us that serve as the state's safety net.

The ongoing, increased state investments to the **Emergency Services Grant Program (ESP)** and **Homeless Youth Act (HYA)** proposed in SF388 would help stabilize our state's emergency shelter system and scale services to better respond to Minnesota's homelessness crisis. As the state's most flexible funding sources for youth and adults experiencing homelessness, ESP and HYA can support operations and services like housing navigators, medical and mental health help, employment counseling and job placements, transportation and more, as well as the shelter workforce behind them.

More than ever before, our state has an opportunity to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring; but it requires bold investments like those in SF388 to first support those in immediate crisis. We ask for your support to pass this funding quickly, so that we may move forward collectively to focus on longer-term solutions needed to ensure all Minnesotans have a stable home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Schmidt".

Lorna Schmidt
Director, Public Policy & Advocacy