



February 1st, 2023

Chair Wiklund

Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

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

Chum is writing to express support for SF388. Chum is people of faith working together to provide basic necessities, foster stable lives, and organize for a just and compassionate community. We have been providing shelter to people living homeless in Duluth for nearly 50 years. Our 44 member congregations join together in advocating towards ending unsheltered homelessness, and Chum is one of nine service providers collaborating on lasting solutions to address homelessness ([more info](#)) and this package will make it that much closer to becoming a reality. We want to lift up three of the items listed in the legislation but we fully support everything included.

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

We join the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH) in advocating for \$200 million in funding, and we are very pleased to see \$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. In Duluth alone we have about 600 unsheltered homeless while our shelter beds number 155, so we are all operating at or above capacity. *This morning we experienced below zero temperatures in the double digits, with wind chills of minus 30 degrees.* In the Warming Center people are sitting up, sleeping on the floor, huddling inside just to survive the night. When Chum's shelter beds are full, people sit up in the Drop-in Center, sleep propped up against walls or on tables. We received a \$2M grant from Congress, but need another \$2.5M to expand the emergency shelter for short-term stays as a crisis response.

Statewide, MCH completed a statewide survey to gauge the needed state resources to build, acquire, or renovate shelters to meet the need. They 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. We are seeing extended stays in shelter, with

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people qualified for housing assistance on the Coordinated Entry List waiting for months and as much as 2 years before suitable housing becomes available. Consequently, Duluth providers worked together to create a model to effectively make emergency shelter a short-term, one-time experience in congregate shelter, with rapid transition into a place offering security and dignity, providing capacity to effectively address their personal issues that resulted in homelessness. ([Stepping On Up](#))

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

We are thrilled that SF388 includes the MCH's full request for ESP. This funding will allow organizations and local communities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness through supportive shelters and 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. Especially after an extended experience of unsheltered homelessness or long-term stay in emergency shelter, THP helps individuals and families obtain stable housing where they can develop or regain the skills necessary to live in a stable housing environment, or to develop economic capacity and 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. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness, so we thank you for all you are doing to save the lives of these Minnesotans who need this kind of assistance that will help them begin to thrive.

Sincerely,



John Cole

Executive Director

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