

January 30th, 2023  
Chair Wiklund  
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

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

My name is Dave Behrens, and I'm writing to express support for SF388. I have been a board member of The Link for over five years, and have seen both the youth homelessness crisis in Minnesota, and the amazing work The Link does to support homeless youth. The Link is part of a broader state-wide coalition of youth service providers called the Youth Services Network (YSN). The Link along with the YSN has been advocating towards ending youth homelessness for a number of years and this package will make it that much closer to becoming a reality. We know that shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness. We want to lift up the Homeless Youth Act listed in the legislation but we fully support everything that is included in the Pathways Home Act.

Youth homelessness is a crisis in our state! On any given night there are 4,872 unaccompanied youth who are experiencing homelessness. These are young people who become homeless due to many reasons-we see youth who are kicked out due to their sexual orientation or gender identity, youth who's family can't afford housing large enough for the whole family so the older youth are finding alternative housing; youth who are falling through the cracks or aging out of our foster care system and more.

We see youth who are then forced to make horrible decisions to survive-some having to live in a car, go between libraries and public transportation, live in an encampment, find a doorway of a building or an abandoned building to live out of, or trade sex for a place to sleep.

These young people deserve a safe and stable place to live and support with accomplishing the goals that they have for themselves! And we as a state have an opportunity to do this! We can reduce and end youth homelessness-an investment in the state's Homeless Youth Act is the way to do this!

The Homeless Youth Act provides a continuum of services (street outreach, drop-in center, homeless prevention, emergency shelter, host homes and all models of housing) that can provide young people with what they need and deserve to get out of homelessness! Please support the Pathways Home Act which includes a **\$25 million increase in 2024/2025 and \$40 million in 2026/2027!**

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

- **Homeless Management Information System**
- **\$9 million for the Transitional Housing Program**
- **\$40 million in 2024/25 and \$70 million in 2026/2027 for the Emergency Services Program**
- **\$150 million for Emergency Shelter Facilities**
- **Chosen Family Pilot**

We cannot thank you enough for your incredible support of all people experiencing homelessness in our state-including unaccompanied youth and young families.

Sincerely,

Dave Behrens

Board Member of The Link