

February 1st, 2023
Chair Wiklund
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

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

I hope this finds you well. I am writing to you from International Falls, MN where the temp currently stands at -22. I am the Executive Director of a small community based organization, Servants of Shelter, that operates an emergency based shelter, permanent supportive housing and a drop in center for our small community. Tonight, we will house 24 households in our facilities. In our border community of 6,000 residents we shelter an average of 270 people a year. We are unique in a community of our size to have developed the emergency and supportive housing programs that we have, but we are not unique in the desperate lack of affordable housing- especially housing that is low barrier, accessible and dignified. This housing not only keeps people safe, but it allows them to work, parent, and heal.

We work incredibly hard and have a community which recognizes the need, but ESP and Shelter Capital funding is essential to keeping these programs viable. Homes are not only essential they are places of healing, and a community cannot be safe and healthy when their members are unhoused. Please support the Pathways Home Act. Every dollar invested in providing safe housing has health and economic benefits that have long lasting effects.

\$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.

We applaud the leadership for bringing this bill forward. Shelter saves lives and housing ends homelessness.

Sincerely,
Ariana Daniel
Executive Director
Servants of Shelter

