

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



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

My name is Randy Umphlett, and I am writing to express my gratitude that SF 388 is being considered. As someone who has experienced homelessness and the difficulty of living in a shelter, I know the impact this bill will have on thousands of people like me.

Seven years ago, I was homeless. I had hurt my back at work, and over time I became addicted to the painkillers the doctor prescribed. I tried multiple times to come off the drugs, but I wasn't able to. Eventually, I lost my housing. I ended up staying on the streets, and then at a shelter. I lived in a room with 17 other men, double-bunked.

Although this time was hard, I was lucky. There were only two staff at the shelter that helped people get permanent housing. They were so overworked that most people didn't even know that those staff existed. But I happened to walk by the office one day, and they reached out to me. They helped me find a home with Aeon, and to get other supports through Simpson Housing Services.

When I finally got a home, I was clean within just a few months. Simpson helped me get care for both my physical health *and* my mental health. I showed a model of what sobriety could look like. They showed me that there was a chance for me.

I remember my first day. I remember what it was like, knowing that this was *my* place, for the first time. Simpson gave me some things to help me – cleaning supplies, blankets, a pillow – and for the first time, it was my pillow. It was my bed. It was my room. It wasn't much, but it was mine. I hadn't had that for a long time. And six years later, here I am. That was the first day, and I remember it like it was yesterday. Coming from the madness of the shelter, my own apartment was serenity.

I am so grateful that I was brought back to center. Without those workers at the shelter who reached out to me and provided a chance, I wouldn't be where I am today. Through them, I found an apartment. And together, Aeon and Simpson saved my life.

When you're living on the street, you sleep wherever you can. There is no feeling of safety – you're always on guard. Being in a shelter gave me a basic level of safety that allowed me to hope for something more. And without that, I wouldn't have the ultimate safety that I have now – of being at home. Coming from homelessness, you go from the street, to shelter, to home. And without that middle step, you can't get to where I am today.

Not everybody gets this. I did. And I get to smile today because of it. I share my story now because I am grateful that the Pathways Home Act has been brought forward, to help other people like me. I have been given so much, and I am grateful that others will be given that opportunity, too. Thank you.

With gratitude,

Randy Umphlett

> 901 North 3rd Street, Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55401

> 612-341-3148 office
612-341-4208 fax

> aeon.org

