

West Central Minnesota Continuum of Care Homeless To Housed Task Force



Working together to make homelessness, rare, brief and non-recurring

January 30, 2023

Chair Wiklund
Members of the Health & Human Services Committee

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

I am writing on behalf of the West Central Minnesota Continuum of Care (CoC) to express support for SF388. The CoC's vision is to make homelessness rare, brief, and one-time. In 2017, the CoC successfully ended Veteran's homelessness thanks to having the right tools, strategies, and resources. We believe we also have the right plan to end homelessness for families, youth, and persons who are chronically homeless but unfortunately lack all the resources needed to achieve it. SF388 provides most of the resources needed to achieve this goal and could supplement planned federal requests for additional funding. Specifically, I want to lift up the following items listed in the legislation:

- **Emergency Shelter Facilities** Our region access to additional shelter spaces in our rural areas, 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.
- **Emergency Services Program (ESP)** The ESP request will increase support for rural shelters (including motel vouchers), much needed outreach, and other key resources for support services.
- **Transitional Housing Program (THP)** THP is vital for many individuals and families leaving shelter, especially youth, families and those exiting an institution. THP helps with bridge housing until they are able to move into more stable housing. Especially important right now is having the ability to exit shelter more rapidly, which is more expensive, and develop good rental history while finding a permanent housing destination.
- **Homeless Management Information System** Comprehensive, reliable data is crucial to understanding our progress toward our goal of ending homelessness. HMIS is MN's primary data source on homelessness, providing valuable demographic, usage, need, and performance data. HMIS is a necessary tool for system planning, program and system evaluation, service coordination, and service delivery. Increasingly, HMIS has also become an essential tool for understanding and reducing system disparities based on age, race, geography, gender, victim status, or disability. Currently, MN's HMIS is not adequately funded to meet the growing ways data is and can be used to help us end homelessness.

- **Homeless Youth Act** and **Homeless youth; chosen family grants** – Ending youth homelessness requires strategies and resources unique to the needs of youth. Ending homelessness for children and youth is especially important to ending all homelessness as the trauma of homelessness can have a major effect on youth's future including a higher risk of becoming homeless as an adult.

Thank you so much for helping to move this bill forward to assure regions like ours are equipped with the right resources to help end homelessness.

Sincerely,

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