



March 22, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health & Human Services Committee

Re: SF2966 Housing & Homelessness Provisions

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Catholic Charities Twin Cities, I write in support of the Governor's proposed investments to advance housing justice and address Minnesota's homelessness crisis (SF2966). We'd like to specifically call out these provisions, which have been identified as priorities by our staff and the people we serve:

Strengthening Adult Income Supports (Article 5, Sections 4 and 9-10)

Directed toward low-income seniors and individuals with disabilities, Housing Support pairs housing assistance with case management and basic necessities like a bed, linens and laundry. It is one of the state's best tools to prevent and end homelessness, but outdated payment policies mean that individuals with "unearned income" like SSI, RSDI and veterans' benefits may be forced to pay as much as 90% of their benefits each month toward housing costs, leaving them just \$121 each month for other expenses.

This extreme financial disincentive contributes to Housing Support-eligible individuals declining housing, choosing to stay in shelter or on the streets instead, and to current tenants being at risk of eviction due to the inability to pay both their share of monthly rent and other basic expenses. This provision, which aligns with SF992 (Boldon), reforms policies to ensure individuals only pay 30% of unearned income toward housing costs and excludes tribal per capita payments and lived experience income from countable income. Doing so would help more individuals exit homelessness and help those with housing keep it.

Addressing Homelessness (Article 15, Section 2)

Ongoing, increased public investments in the Emergency Services Program (ESP) and Homeless Youth Act (HYA) are necessary to help stabilize our state's emergency shelter system and scale services to better respond to Minnesota's homelessness crisis. As the state's most flexible funding sources for youth and adults experiencing homelessness, ESP and HYA can support operations and services like housing navigators, medical and mental health help, employment counseling and job placements, transportation and more, as well as the shelter workforce behind them.

More than ever before, our state has an opportunity to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring, but it requires bold investments like those proposed in SF2966. We ask for your support this session.

Sincerely,

Lorna Schmidt
Director, Public Policy & Advocacy