



CATHOLIC CHARITIES
Twin Cities

Catholic Charities at Elliot Park
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March 31, 2023

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Chair, Senate Health & Human Services Committee

Re: SF2995 (HHS Omnibus) Homelessness Provisions

Chair Wiklund and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Catholic Charities Twin Cities, thank you for your commitment to addressing our homelessness crisis and for including in your omnibus bill (SF2995) emergency shelter investments that will benefit thousands of youth, adults and seniors who are without a home tonight.

Our emergency shelter system is a safety net for those most in need in our community, but lack of public investment for decades means our net is filled with holes and loose threads. Increased state investments in the **Emergency Services Program** and **Homeless Youth Act**, as well as dedicated funding for **Catholic Charities' Homeless Elders Program**, reforms to **Housing Support income policies** and establishing a **recuperative care** model will, collectively, help us provide a more supportive landing for those who may otherwise fall through the cracks.

These requests aren't new. Advocates and bipartisan legislators from across the state have been calling for this funding for years as we struggle to respond to the state's homelessness crisis. What is new, however, are the increased demands we see for shelter services, more frequent and challenging cases of substance use and mental illness among those we serve, rising rates of homelessness among older adults, and higher operating costs.

Your investments in SF2995 are a starting point for repairing our safety net. They could help prevent the closure of some life-saving shelter programs. But the needs are far greater than the funding levels currently proposed here.

As you move forward, we urge you to you keep working with partners and advocates to identify ways to build upon these investments to match levels proposed in the Pathway Home Act (SF388). The pandemic brought lessons learned, innovative pilot projects and new partnerships that, if carried forward, could help build a more robust safety net, with more of the wraparound services needed to ensure people don't become permanently caught up in it—but we can't do it without more significant and ongoing funding from our state partners.

More than ever before, we have an opportunity to disrupt trends in homelessness and ensure all Minnesotans have a safe, stable place to call home. We ask for your support.

Sincerely,

Lorna Schmidt

Director, Public Policy & Advocacy

Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.