February 8, 2023

Chair Lindsey Port
3213 Minnesota Senate Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: S.F. 609

Dear Chair Port and Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee members,

Local Housing Trust Funds (LHTF) are a proven tool that counties and communities can implement to respond to local housing needs. Trust Funds are flexible, adaptable, and easily deployable.

The Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners created the Otter Tail County Housing Trust Fund in 2021. Currently, the Otter Tail County HRA is working on deploying a portion of these funds to create affordable senior housing rental units in the City of Dalton and other rural areas of the county. A recent housing needs study identified the need for 677 additional units of senior housing that are affordable to seniors below 80% of area median income over the next 15 years. Local landlords report that seniors are outliving the proceeds from selling their homes and cannot afford market rate rents.

Providing quality affordable housing to seniors smartens our use of public resources. Studies show that when individuals move into affordable housing, health care outcomes improve. And it is especially important for seniors with few assets to remain in the community near family and support systems. Finally, when seniors sell their homes, it creates an opportunity for younger families to move in and further bolster the community and school systems.

State partnership, through S.F. 609's State Match for LHTFs, would leverage the county's local investment thereby enabling the county and other local jurisdictions in the state to stretch local resources and create additional housing opportunities.

I urge lawmakers to partner with the county and support our initiatives by providing state matching funds proposed in S.F. 609.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Barbara Dacy
Executive Director
Otter Tail County Housing and Redevelopment Authority