



February 13, 2023

The Honorable Lindsey Port
Chair, Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee
3213 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Mike Howard
Chair, Housing Finance and Policy Committee
473 State Office Building
St Paul, MN 55155

Via email

Re: Support for H.F.1440

Dear Chair Port, Chair Howard, members of the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee and members of the House Housing Finance and Policy Committee:

We write in support of H.F.1440, which funds emergency rental assistance for housing insecure Minnesotans through FHPAP (Family Homeless Prevention Assistance Program). We also support efforts to ensure that a portion of the funding increase in H.F.1440 is targeted to emergency rental assistance needs. We write to you as individuals and organizations concerned for Minnesotans' housing instability and insecurity, including renters, renter advocates, legal services providers, housing providers, and service providers.

Families desperately need emergency rental assistance and homelessness prevention now. Minnesotans continue to face historically high evictions, the vast majority of which are for nonpayment of rent. Without emergency rental assistance, families are at severe risk of homelessness and harms to their health, educational outcomes, work stability, and more. See "Eviction filings soared in 2022 and continue into new year," (Star Tribune, Jan 22, 2023). <https://www.startribune.com/eviction-filings-soared-in-2022-and-continue-into-new-year/600245584/>.

Families that see the most harm from inaction are Black, Indigenous and households of color, as well as rural households. Black and brown families were disproportionately harmed by the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, harm now compounded by inflation and rising rents.

Emergency rental assistance works. It prevents harm to households from housing displacement and ensures that housing providers remain financially secure and able to pay their expenses as well. Research shows that those with rent debt are disproportionately people of color and individuals with low incomes. Emergency rental assistance programs, including FHPAP, predominantly assist low-income households and households of color, serving those most in need.

Counties and cities confirm that they have no or little resources for families facing eviction and the harms of displacement from home. Hennepin County reports a need for approximately \$1 million monthly to provide emergency rental assistance to those requesting it at Hennepin County Housing Court, with that need rising to \$2.5 million monthly to address the current crisis more holistically, including with pre-eviction

interventions. Olmsted County, which uses Emergency Assistance (EA) and Emergency General Assistance (EGA) for Emergency Rental Assistance, is out of EGA, the fund that serves single adults, until June. It dedicated \$200,000 of local homeless prevention aid to ERA for families in 2023, after its annual 2022 allocation of these funds (which serve families) was exhausted in six months. Approximately 90% of evictions in Olmsted, at the rate of 15-20 eviction cases per week, are for non-payment of rent.

The Minnesota ERASE Campaign (End Rental Arrears and Stop Evictions) is an effort to eliminate rental indebtedness caused by the pandemic, prevent evictions, and create support for long term policy changes to end housing instability and homelessness. Co-convenors of the campaign include ACER (African Career Education Resource); Housing Justice Center, and MHP (Minnesota Housing Partnership).

Thank you for your attention. We ask you to do everything possible to ensure no family is displaced and unhoused. We urge your support for H.F. 1440, and request that bills providing emergency rental assistance funds to Minnesota families in need are fast tracked through the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Aeon
African Career Education & Resource Inc. (ACER)
American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO)
CommonBond Communities
Community Works Consulting
Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)
Family Housing Fund
Hennepin County
HOME Line
Housing Justice Center
Integrated Community Solutions, Inc.
Lake County HRA
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD)
Metropolitan Interfaith council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)
MinnCAP
Minnesota Housing Partnership
New American Development Center (NADC)
Our Spring Lake Store LLC
Three Rivers Community Action