

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

To: Senator Lindsey Port, Chair, Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee  
Re: Support for SF 1899

Dear Senator Port,

I am writing to express my formal support for SF 1899, allocating \$45 million to the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority (MPHA). As you know, the funding would enable MPHA to overcome decades of underfunding from HUD and set up a significant part of MPHA's Community Housing Resources (CHR) portfolio up to become financially self-sustaining.

**There is no solution to the housing crisis without public housing.** Public housing, particularly Section 9 and Section 8 public housing, are the gold standard of affordability. Starting in the 1970s, coordinated attacks on public housing funding and administration policy have massively undermined the government's ability to create, maintain, and preserve all forms of public housing. Section 18 properties like the CHR portfolio have been one of the very limited options available to many PHAs, and even these properties have been underfunded to the point of a \$31 million capital repair backlog.

The repair backlog on the CHR portfolio doesn't just mean worse conditions for residents, it fundamentally jeopardizes the public housing itself. Unaddressed maintenance issues snowball into increasingly disruptive and expensive problems, damaging public housing's reputation as high quality, stable, and desirable. It is a textbook example of the neoliberal tactic of underfunding a program, letting outcomes deteriorate, and then deeming it a failure as a pretext for privatization. **Addressing the backlog in CHR properties now using this \$45 million is key to averting the risk of privatization.**

Furthermore, state funding to clear the backlog of repairs on CHR properties allows MPHA to leverage the portfolio's value to push forward to other preservation and production initiatives, including of Section 9 and Section 8 housing. **The downstream impacts of clearing the backlog mean increasing the stock of permanently public housing.** I intend to work with my colleagues and lead the City of Minneapolis to pass a public housing levy this year, generating millions in desperately needed revenue for MPHA. Securing state funding for the CHR backlog via SF 1899 would mean that the revenue from the public housing levy would be freed up towards other projects, such as building new Section 9 public housing under the MPHA's existing Faircloth authority of 900 units. This would make a significant impact on the current MPHA waitlist of about 8000 families who desperately need permanently affordable housing.

Because public housing is funded and operated in multi-jurisdictional structures, it's easy to pass the blame for systemic underfunding. But all policymakers, at every level of government, have an obligation to fully use all the tools available to them if we want to solve the housing crisis. None of us can fix a systemic problem alone, but if we get serious about taking action on every level, the problem can be

fixed.

I urge you to support SF 1899 and help address our housing crisis with this historic investment.  
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RWonsley', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Council Member Robin Wonsley  
Minneapolis City Council – Ward 2  
[Ward2@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Ward2@minneapolismn.gov)