



March 8, 2023

Members of the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee
Via Electronic Delivery

Re: Support for Tenant's Rights Omnibus Bill

Dear Members of the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee:

Violence Free Minnesota (VFMN), the coalition to end relationship abuse, and the Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MNCASA), jointly submit this letter to express our support for the Tenant's Rights Omnibus Bill. VFMN and MNCASA are statewide coalitions with over 120 member programs collectively who provide advocacy and services to domestic and sexual violence victims/survivors throughout all of Minnesota's 87 counties.

Domestic violence has been identified as one of the top five reasons people experience homelessness in Minnesota. Eviction records, even when they are dismissed, remain significant barriers leading to homelessness, housing instability and deeper entanglements within systems. An eviction record can single-handedly prevent a victim/survivor from obtaining safe housing. Housing instability also significantly increases vulnerability to other forms of violence, such as exploitation and trafficking.

In a recent survey that Violence Free Minnesota conducted with victims/survivors, nearly 50% of respondents listed past evictions as being one of the most challenging parts of the tenant screening process. Victims/survivors face evictions for issues that directly stem from the abuse they experience, such as evictions for noise disturbances or property damage caused by their partner. Some even risk eviction for simply calling police for assistance. Evictions also result from the financial consequences of economic abuse perpetrated by their partner.

Privacy and autonomy are key healing boundaries for victim/survivors and their families to establish after violence, oppression, stalking, control and abuse. Having a sense of safety and privacy within one's own home is not only foundational for wellbeing and thriving but is especially integral to allow healing and recovery from all forms of abuse.

Even in the best case where an abuse of power is not actively at play related to a housing provider/landlord relationship with a victim/survivor tenant, a landlord tenant relationship has an inherent power dynamic within it. A landlord/housing provider is a person of authority. This gives their interactions with the victim/survivor tenant the possibility of supreme weight. A landlord/housing provider has an ability to impact a victim/survivor's sense of safety within their housing by many of their interactions.

Proper notice and a right to privacy as outlined in the Tenant's Right's Omnibus Bill give a reasonable standard to adhere to across our state that is in the best interests of tenant victim/survivors and their families, while providing reasonable access for landlord/housing providers for non-emergency business.

It is important to note that evictions disproportionately affect Black Minnesotans. The intersectionality of hundreds of years of racial inequity, enacted through systems to oppress and silence Black, Indigenous and BIPOC relatives, has a direct impact on experiencing domestic and sexual violence and our housing crisis, which includes 55,000 Minnesotans, one crisis away from an eviction notice.

Thank you for taking the time to understand the importance of preventing evictions for victim/survivors in the first place and maintaining a sense of privacy and safety for victim/survivors and their families once they are housed.

We urge you to pass the Tenant's Rights Omnibus Bill, and with it, create increased safety and measurable long-term stability for survivors and their families, so that the policies in place are no longer contributing to the harm.

Thank you for your time.

In community,

Guadalupe Lopez
Executive Director
Violence Free Minnesota

Artika Roller
Executive Director
Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault