

March 16th, 2023
Chair Port
Members of the Housing & Homelessness Prevention Committee



Chair Port and members of the Housing & Homelessness Prevention Committee, ^{home changes everything}

My name is Linda Stage, and I am writing to express my support for the Bring it Home, MN campaign. As someone who has experienced the difficulties of finding affordable housing, I know the impact this bill could have on thousands of Minnesotans like me.

In 1996, I went through a difficult divorce. It had been an abusive relationship, and in the settlement, my husband took everything - all my savings, my retirement funds, and more. I had worked my entire life as a nurse and a nursing instructor, helping to educate caretakers in my community. But when my husband left, I could no longer afford the rent on my house.

I began to search for other housing options. I called shelters that told me I would have to sleep on the floor because they didn't have beds. But as a senior woman, I knew that my body wouldn't be able to handle that. I looked for senior housing and low-income housing throughout the Twin Cities area. I had a notebook full of phone numbers and notes, but I couldn't find anything that I would qualify for. Most places didn't have any availability. Many had a waiting list of at least 2 years.

I had no other choice but to live out of my car. I'm a diabetic, and it was hard to find a place to store my insulin, which needs to be refrigerated. But I was lucky that it was summertime, and not the frigid temperatures of a Minnesota winter. Knowing the change of season was around the corner, it motivated me to continue searching for housing options.

Through the grapevine, an employee at Aeon found out that I was homeless, and he worked to get me into an apartment. Once I was in an apartment that I could afford, everything changed.

Since then, I have had the opportunity to grow. For the first time in my life, I can say that I have friendships. I am proud of my home. And I'm giving back – not only to my building, but to the larger neighborhood surrounding us. I've helped organize a food shelf, worked on voter registration, and on the census. And I worked as an election judge in my community this past November.

My home makes it easier for me to manage my health. I have a refrigerator where I can store my insulin, and an address to have my medications sent. And, best of all, I have a place where my grandchildren can come to visit me, where I know that it's safe. I have been able to get excited about my life again!

As a senior, my journey may not look like the face of homelessness, but here I am. I am only one person out of a growing number of seniors facing homelessness. The subsidies that Bring it Home, MN would provide would help others like me find and maintain safe housing. My housing voucher provides a basic level of stability that allows me to spend time working to improve my community.

Thinking back on the difficulties I had finding a place, the most wonderful feeling is to know that, because of the subsidies created by Bring it Home, MN, other people won't have to go through what I did. I ask you to support and pass SF11 this year. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda Stage

> 901 North 3rd Street, Suite 150
Minneapolis, MN 55401

> 612-341-3148 office
612-341-4208 fax

> aeon.org

