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Minneapolis, MN 55404  
touchstonemh.org

March 16, 2023

Chair Lindsey Port  
Housing and Homelessness Prevention  
3213 Minnesota Senate Building  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

RE: S.F. 2566

Dear Chair Port and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in support of the Governor's *Strengthen Supportive Housing* legislative change funding of \$20 million in FY 2024-25 on behalf of Touchstone Mental Health. We are an agency focused on supporting people living with mental illness and formerly homeless, whom we support in Permanent Supportive Housing. We are responding to the clear need for more affordable supportive housing in our community through several partnerships that will bring over 200 additional units into the market with a considerable funding gap of \$3-5 million. We also operate three current supportive housing programs and continue to find the need for funding to meet the needs of recipients.

As Touchstone's Vice President of Strategic Innovation and long-time executive administrative leader, I am keenly aware of funding gaps related to working with individuals to secure housing and needed services. Many individuals experiencing homelessness have no access to health care, no documentation to obtain healthcare, and are therefore disconnected from health care. This common scenario leads to significant use of expensive emergency and institutional care.

Thus, funding to support more service and front desk staff and peers (people with lived experience) to help build partnerships and relationships during the significant period of time it takes to gain trust would be extremely beneficial to individuals, and the related costs to the system of care. The quicker health care is made available to pay for needed services, the better our systems of care for people that need it most, would be.

Through funding with the goal of stabilizing and strengthening supportive housing and service gaps, you directly impact the systems of care and housing needed by thousands of children, adults, and families in Minnesota. Thank you for your serious and diligent consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michelle Wincell O'Leary", written over a horizontal line.

Michelle Wincell O'Leary