



ISAIAH Letter in Support of Multifamily apartment buildings by right (SF 4254 A-2 DE)

April 15, 2024

Dear Chair Dziedzic and Members of the State & Local Government Committee:

ISAIAH is a multi-racial, state-wide, nonpartisan coalition of faith communities, Black barbershops, childcare centers, and other community-based constituencies working toward racial, economic, and climate justice in Minnesota. Our mission is to empower our diverse constituencies to act collectively in the public arena toward changes that benefit all of society. We are writing to support Senator Port's bill that will pave the way for increased abundance of multifamily housing development, including affordable housing.

No matter what corner of the state we live in, or what we look like, all Minnesotans deserve safe, dignified housing, affordable care and a future in which all can thrive. Yet for too long, the wealthy and well-connected have undermined public investment in housing in order to avoid paying their fair share in taxes. In addition, many local municipalities have used local zoning codes to limit the amount of affordable housing that can get built.

Local zoning and land use practices have a shameful history of explicit racism. While the racially and economically discriminatory intent of these local codes and practices may have become more circumspect, the outcomes and impact remain: Minnesota continues to be deeply segregated by race and income.

Because of the human-created scarcity of land available for development of multifamily housing, and because of onerous approval processes local governments often have in place, a handful of angry and fearful neighbors can too easily block or kill needed new developments. The development that is most vulnerable to those tactics is precisely that which is most needed - housing options that are affordable to low and moderate income families and individuals. We see the results in skyrocketing homelessness, a lack of housing options for working families and young people. Too many Minnesota families continue to struggle to afford safe dignified housing for themselves and their loved ones.

Our other major concern is climate justice. The largest source of carbon emissions is transportation. Compact cities and towns help protect the environment. When more people can do their regular errands without burning gas - walking, rolling, biking, or by transit, it reduces carbon emissions and keeps communities safer and more connected.

This bill contains one measure which we feel undermines the intent, by allowing cities to require mixed use developments (para. c, lines 3.13-3.17). This in particular harms the prospects for deeply affordable housing development and should be stricken.

Sincerely,

Lars Negstad, Policy Director