



April 1, 2024

Senator Zaynab Mohamed
2103 Minnesota Senate Building
Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Representative Sandra Feist
409 State Office Building
Minnesota House of Representatives
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Senator Mohamed and Representative Feist,

On behalf of the Dakota County Board of Commissioners, I am writing to express our support for SF 4018/HF 3971 (Bridge to Shelter Act), legislation that would provide much needed funding for Minnesota's homelessness response system. Dakota County is committed to providing emergency shelter for people experiencing homelessness. Consistent, dedicated, flexible funding to support this work is essential for making this commitment a reality. The \$60 million authorized in the bill will help further build out the system of supports to on the ground providers.

The Minnesotans we serve face numerous challenges, most of them structural. Our work involves supporting them as they navigate the social services systems, ensuring that they can meet their basic needs, and secure stable and dignified housing. Services like crisis response, diversion, outreach, and housing-focused case management are vital to the program success, all eligible under the Bridge to Shelter Act.

Minnesota has been trending in the right direction, as a recent study from the Wilder Foundation reported that homelessness has declined slightly over the past few years. It is noteworthy that the COVID-19 pandemic and precedent funding in rental and housing assistance played a significant role. With that assistance gone, we would be unable to sustain our efforts and services we provide in ending homelessness. SF 4018/HF 3971 would mitigate that gap of funding and resources and would help continue our efforts in taking care of some of our most vulnerable population in our state.

Thank you for advancing this legislation and your work to ensure that, until we end homelessness, that it is rare, brief, and non-reoccurring.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Atkins".

Joe Atkins, Chair
Dakota County Board of Commissioners

County Board of Commissioners

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