



April 2, 2024

Dear Senator Dibble and the Members of the Health and Human Services Committee:

We write in support of SF 5032 to fund a study on pregnant and parenting homeless youth.

At Greater Twin Cities United Way, our mission is to unite changemakers, advocate for social good, and develop solutions to address the challenges no one can solve alone. Together with our partners, we touched over 500,000 lives across the 9-county metro area. Nearly one-third of the 100 nonprofits and coalitions we fund through our grantmaking focus on housing and homelessness prevention. We know access to affordable, safe, and quality housing stabilizes individuals and families, providing them with a foundation from which they can pursue their goals and thrive. This recognition becomes even more pronounced when we consider youth experiencing homelessness, especially pregnant and parenting youth.

Every night in Minnesota, nearly 5,000 youth experience homelessness and do not have a safe space to sleep. Thirty-five percent of youth experiencing homelessness are pregnant and/or parenting, with the rate skyrocketing to nearly 50% in Hennepin County. Pregnancy and parenting are difficult circumstances even for well-resourced parents, but for youth experiencing homelessness, the challenges can be overwhelming. Pregnant youth who are homeless are higher risk for complications during delivery, low birth weight, and premature birth. Additionally, parenting youth who are experiencing homelessness increase the likelihood of their children being exposed to violence, neglected, abused, and subsequently removed from them and into the child protection system. These adverse outcomes impact a child's ability to thrive and increases their chance of experiencing homelessness in their lifetime.

We know what can happen when strategic interventions are absent. But what are the outcomes for pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness when interventions and resources are accessible? Passing SF 5032 supports identifying the unique needs of this population, as well as uncovering best practices will equip practitioners, advocates, and policymakers to disrupt intergenerational homelessness giving way to healthy children, parents, and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephannie L. Lewis".

Stephannie L. Lewis
Associate Vice President, Advocacy & Community
Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon Smith Jones".

Shannon Smith Jones
Senior Vice President, Community Impact
Greater Twin Cities United Way