

March 7, 2024

Members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness Prevention:

Second Harvest Heartland, a Brooklyn Park-based food bank serving 41 counties in Minnesota and 18 in western Wisconsin, is pleased to offer our support for SF3964 (Mitchell) a bill to expand housing options at all levels of affordability throughout Minnesota by allowing the production of homes of all types and densities.

As a food bank, our primary mission is to ensure that Minnesotans experiencing food insecurity do not go hungry. We do that by sourcing and distributing food through a network of more than 1,500 food shelves and food distribution programs. With demand for emergency food assistance higher than ever, however, we also know that emergency food distribution alone cannot end hunger in Minnesota.

To end it, we need to address hunger at its roots. That is why we are proud members of the newly formed Nourish MN coalition, a group of nonprofits advocating for policies that would provide greater economic security for more Minnesotans – including housing and childcare affordability and access to transit. With housing costs rising and pandemic-era financial supports long expired, housing affordability rises to the top as an impediment to food – and financial – security for our neighbors.

SF3964 would help address this by allowing the market to drive housing development, including the production of more affordable housing options throughout our state. Such policies have been proven to help keep rents and mortgages more affordable – an important goal with recent reports showing that half of Minnesota renters struggle to afford rent, and fewer Minnesotans owning homes.

We know that when life becomes unaffordable for Minnesotans, food and grocery budgets are often the first things to get cut – and sometimes eliminated altogether. That helps explain the dramatic increase in food shelf visits we've experienced over the past two years. SF3964 would ease the demand on the emergency food system over time by increasing the supply of affordable housing options, which in turn would allow more of our neighbors to afford groceries and other basic needs.

For these reasons, we encourage your support of SF3964, which would build on the historic investments in affordable housing made last year and make a real and lasting difference for our neighbors and their families.

Sincerely,

Zach Rodvold

Director of Public Policy