



March 6, 2024

To: Chair Port & Members of the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee  
Re: **Support for SF4601**

Dear Chair Port, Vice Chair Boldon, and Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee Members,

The Bridge for Youth is writing in support of SF4601 which states that a municipality shall not enact, amend, or enforce a zoning ordinance that prohibits emergency shelters, except in areas zoned as residential or agricultural.

The Bridge for Youth centers youth voice, justice, and equity in all we do, and empowers youth experiencing homelessness through safe shelter, basic needs, and healthy relationships. Our vision is that all youth feel safe, accepted, and supported. Though we primarily serve youth from the Twin Cities metro area, we support youth across the state of Minnesota by offering emergency shelter and transitional housing for youth, including parenting youth and their young children, as well as outreach and support services.

During the 2023 legislative session, the legislature passed \$100M in funding to create, enhance and rehabilitate emergency shelters. However, even with funding, many shelters face barriers at the municipal level to where a shelter can be located. This has been an issue we have heard in our listening sessions, but until SF4601, there has not been a proposed solution to address this. By passing SF4601, shelters across the state will be able to move forward in the zoning and planning process with their current or future plans.

The Bridge considers SF4601 to be a continuation of ending unsheltered homelessness. Every region in the state needs access to additional shelter spaces, and this legislation will help provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the needs such as those that are culturally responsive, gender affirming, accessible, and are low barrier; shelter is the first step to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

To show the need for more shelter spaces, the MN Department of Human Services- Office of Economic Opportunity received \$360M in requests for shelter capital compared to the \$100M available. It is extremely difficult for shelters to have the capacity to develop new or enhanced shelter spaces. This includes "NIMBYism" (Not in My Backyard) and SF4601 is one way to combat this.

We applaud the forward thinking of SF4601. Up until 2023, the legislature had only once ever invested into the capital needs for emergency shelter. It would be unfortunate and harm many people experiencing homelessness if a region had the plans and funding in place to create a shelter system but was not allowed to move forward due to restrictive zoning regulations.

Sincerely,

Lisa Mears  
President