



March 5, 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,

Churches United for the Homeless (Churches United) 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.

Over the last five years Churches United has supported the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless focus on the theme of “ending unsheltered homelessness”. We remain deeply grateful that during the 2023 legislative session, the legislature passed \$100M in funding to create, enhance and rehabilitate emergency shelters. Churches United was the recipient of more than 4 million dollars from an initial 17 million dollars designated for this purpose in 2021. We used these funds combined with private foundation funding and CDBG funding to completely renovate our largest shelter, Micah’s Mission. Even with this new and much needed funding, many shelters across Minnesota face barriers at the municipal level regarding where a shelter may be located. Passing SF4601 will enable shelter systems across the state to move forward in the zoning and planning process with current and future plans.

While Churches United was not awarded funding in the most recent round of Shelter Capital Funding, we hope in future years to build a Family Resource Center which will provide shelter for families and a youth drop-in center in a dedicated facility where adults not accompanied by minor children are not sheltered. This, in turn, will allow us to provide more emergency shelter beds for adults at our Micah’s Mission facility. Having potential zoning barriers removed will clear the way for this much needed facility when funding allows.

Churches United considers SF4601 to be a continuation of the focus on ending unsheltered homelessness. Every region in the state, including Moorhead, needs access to additional shelter spaces. This legislation will help provide opportunities for shelters to generate new models to meet the needs in spaces that are culturally responsive, gender affirming, accessible, and low barrier. While outreach to unsheltered individuals and households is essential, safe accessible shelter is essential to finding permanent housing for families, individuals, and seniors experiencing homelessness.

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 the barrier of “NIMBYISM” (Not in My Backyard). Together with education and advocacy, SF4601 is one way to combat this.



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Churches United applauds the forward thinking of SF4601. It would harm many people experiencing homelessness if any entity had the plans and funding in place to create additional shelter but was not allowed to move forward due to restrictive zoning regulations.

Thank you for your thoughtful engagement and consideration of these needs.

In God's Peace,
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