

March 6, 2024

Senator Liz Boldon

Vice Chair, Housing and Homelessness Prevention
95 University Avenue W.
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3201
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-296-3903

Dear Vice Chair Liz Boldon, and Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee,

I am writing in support of bill 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. I want to thank you for being the Chief Author and taking charge of making changes that would allow shelters to be in any zone not identified as residential.

The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH) has been doing work on setting legislative priorities focused on a theme of “ending unsheltered homelessness”. 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 they have heard in multiple 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.

I work for an organization, and we need a new updated shelter and to expand our capacity due to the need for safe sheltering for victims/survivors and their families affected by domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The passing of this bill will support our much-needed work and desire to move forward with grant funding requests and plans to build shelter space to support all victims/survivors although we are Native American specific, we provide services to all relatives in our state of Minnesota as well as sheltering more victims/survivors from our communities and surrounding areas. The programs in the state of Minnesota that are trying to support, empower and educate community members, victims/survivors as well as batterers, have many barriers to face day to day. The shelters that we do our work in should not be another barrier for the employees, volunteers or the people receiving services. Every victim/survivor deserves to have a safe, updated space to heal and begin their healing process to move forward with a nonviolent life.

We are grateful and appreciate your thinking outside the box and finding a solution to a very large problem for the entire state of Minnesota that affects not only victims/survivors but each community across Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Vicki Flor-Behrens

Constituent of Rural Minnesota