



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,

As Executive Director of Simpson Housing Services, Inc., I am 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.

Since 1982, Simpson Housing Services (SHS) has helped single adults and families with children make the transition from homelessness to stable housing. SHS is known for innovative programs and was one of the first agencies to address the growing need for emergency shelter in our community in 1982. Simpson has deep knowledge of, and experience in, shelter operations. In FY 2023, we provided beds to 368 men, women, and gender non-conforming individuals. In addition, 84 shelter guests exited from shelter to a positive destination such as permanent housing, transitional housing, or a board and lodge facility.

Unsheltered homelessness is a public health crisis in our state. According to the Minnesota Department of Health in their "Minnesota Homeless Mortality Report, 2017-2021," "the rate of death is 3 times higher among people who experience homelessness in Minnesota than the general population." As the agency that organizes the Annual Homeless Memorial March and Service each year for the past 39 years, SHS can sadly attest to the drastically shorter life spans of people experiencing homelessness. Emergency shelter saves lives.

SHS 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.

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 harmful for 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,

Steve Horsfield, Executive Director

**Our mission is to house, support, and advocate for people experiencing homelessness.**

160 Glenwood Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55405 office: 612-874-8683 [simpsonhousing.org](http://simpsonhousing.org)