



VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROJECT

SERVING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT IN NORTHWEST MINNESOTA

March 6th, 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,

Violence Intervention Project (VIP) 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.

VIP has an emergency domestic and sexual violence homeless shelter in NW Minnesota. We are the only emergency shelter of this kind in the 5-county area that we serve. We are a smaller shelter and we are typically full and have to use a safe hotel or turn victim/survivors away. 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. 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.

VIP 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,
Staci Reay, Fund Development Manager
Violence Intervention Project