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S.F. No. 4704 – Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance recommendations (A-1 Delete Everything)

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S.F. 4704 is the legislation resulting from the Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance (WERA). In the last legislative session, Minnesota Management and Budget was tasked with facilitating a workgroup to evaluate rental assistance programs and to make recommendations about how rental assistance payments could be expedited. The taskforce was asked to determine how to reach the goals of 1) making a decision on an application for rental assistance within two weeks, and 2) issuing payment to a landlord within 30 days of receiving an application. The programs in the scope of WERA's work include the Family Homelessness Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP), administered by the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA); and emergency assistance (EA) and emergency general assistance (EGA), both of which the Department of Human Services administers. **S.F. 4704** as introduced contains the WERA recommendations; further details on the WERA recommendations can be found in the WERA report. The A-1 delete everything amendment includes provisions relating to MHFA in Article 1, while those that relate to DHS are in Article 2.

Article 1 - Minnesota Housing Finance Agency

Section 1 [462A.2096] requires MHFA to develop an annual projection of the need for rental assistance and to report on the need to the legislature by January 15 each year.

Section 2 requires MHFA to work with DHS to develop criteria for measuring the timeliness of processing rental assistance applications, collect data on application processing speeds for the FHPAP program, and report to the legislature in 2027 about whether application processing goals have been met.

Section 3 requires MHFA to develop uniform e-signature options for the FHPAP program.

Section 4 requires MHFA to develop recommendations to simplify the process of verifying information for FHPAP applications, adopt the recommendations, and provide assistance to FHPAP administrators to implement the recommendations.

Article 2 - Human Services

Section 1 requires DHS to work with MHFA to develop criteria for measuring the timeliness of application processing for emergency assistance and emergency general assistance, collect data on application processing speeds, and report to the legislature in 2027 about whether application processing goals have been met.

Section 2 requires DHS to modify the MAXIS system to give it greater flexibility to make payments while still ensuring payments are accurate and necessary.

Section 3 requires DHS to work with MHFA to develop recommendations for emergency rental assistance that are flexible enough to provide relief and are simple for applicants to understand.

Section 4 requires DHS to develop uniform e-signature options for emergency general assistance and emergency assistance applications.

Section 5 requires DHS to work with administrators to identify strategies to provide adequate funding to process applications for rental assistance.

Section 6 requires DHS to work with local officials to develop recommendations to help simplify the verification process for rental assistance applications.