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My name is Andrea Palumbo and I am a housing attorney for HOME Line. I submit this written testimony on behalf of HOME Line asking you to increase the funding available for emergency rental assistance through FHPAP.

HOME Line, a statewide non-profit tenant advocacy organization, provides free legal, organizing, educational, and advocacy services so tenants throughout Minnesota can solve their own rental housing problems. We also work to improve public and private policies relating to rental housing by involving affected tenants in the process.

I have been employed by HOME Line for five years and for the majority of my time here I have managed our Eviction Prevention Project which seeks to keep tenants facing eviction in their homes.

Most eviction cases are filed because rent hasn't been paid. They also have a tight timeline, so tenants have very little time to prepare for their court appearance. HOME Line's Eviction Prevention Project identifies tenants facing eviction as early as possible in the eviction process. We send letters to tenants across the state who have had evictions filed against them, encouraging them to speak to us. Last year alone we mailed letters to around 25,000 households. A vital tool for helping the tenants we speak to is the availability of emergency rental assistance.

The tenants we speak to are dealing with any number of life events – automobile breakdowns, family illnesses, accidents, job loss – which put them behind on their rent and lined them up for eviction. I've spoken to tenants who are in dire need of emergency rental assistance, but the money just isn't there. This is why an increase in funding is so necessary.

Last year the legislature passed a 14-day notice requirement which gives tenants their chance to figure out what to do, in particular, apply for financial assistance to get the rent paid before a case gets filed. However, even though tenants are receiving advance notice of a possible eviction, the emergency assistance they need to head off a case filing isn't always there. This legislation would provide a substantial boost in available assistance for many of the clients that we talk to every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need for increased emergency rental assistance through FHPAP.