

April 15, 2024

Members of the Senate Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee:

Housing has long been a top concern of NAMI Minnesota members. A lack of safe and affordable housing is one of the most powerful barriers to recovery. When this basic need isn't met, people cycle in and out of homelessness, jails, shelters, and hospitals. That's especially evident in Minnesota, where we are in the midst of an unprecedented housing crisis.

Therefore, we would like to express our support of several provisions of the housing finance omnibus bill. We strongly support funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance program and urge you to fund it at an even more impactful level of \$10,000,000.

We also support funding and policy for expediting rental assistance. Social Security Income is the only income of many people with mental illnesses and there are *zero* housing markets in the United States where a person living solely on SSI can afford a safe apartment without rental assistance. Many Minnesotans are currently waiting weeks or even months to access basic mental health care. Ensuring they have prompt access to quality social determinants of health, such as housing, can help mitigate the damaging impact of our serious lack of mental health treatment. Whereas waiting long periods for both mental health services and housing simultaneously could easily trigger mental health crises.

Thank you for your consideration and please consider us a resource on all issues pertaining to the intersection of mental illness and housing.

Sincerely,

Sue Abderholden, MPH
Executive Director

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Public Policy Coordinator