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March 15, 2024

Re: *Support of SF 4015*

Members of the Senate Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

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.

HOME Line supports SF 4015.

Our statewide hotline provides renters throughout Minnesota with free and confidential legal information regarding their rights. Since opening in 1992, our hotline has advised over 318,000 households throughout the state. Our staff advises tenants about many issues, tenant screening among them. In 2023 alone, HOME Line advised 353 renter households from 35 counties about screening concerns. Tenants' choices in housing are being limited across the state because of screening practices.

Tenants with criminal records will often call us having paid hundreds of dollars in application fees only to be rejected by many landlords. These are some of the most frustrated callers we encounter on our tenant hotline.

Time and again, we see that any tenant with a less-than-perfect credit score, housing record, or criminal record faces significant barriers when looking for a place to live. They are often forced to settle for less desirable housing while paying higher rent and damage deposits. They have no choice.

This bill will give vulnerable tenants a chance to find safe, affordable, and stable housing – all of which benefit everyone.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eric Hauge", written in a cursive style.

Eric Hauge
Executive Director, HOME Line
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