

January 21, 2025

As I start my eighth legislative session with MCCD, I can't help but reflect on the lawmaker that is no longer with us, Senator Kari Dziedzic.

On the first day of the 2025 legislative session I sat in the Senate gallery listening to her colleagues share stories about her and did a fair amount of crying. It is clear that Senator Dziedzic was just as respected by her colleagues as I thought, from both parties. As Senate Dibble shared, "she was a giant in the Senate", she was exactly that in so many ways. They shared her impact, but it went beyond her colleagues, advocates learned so much from her too, and I'm so thankful I was able to get to know her and work with her as an affordable housing advocate.

The first time I met Senator Dziedzic, I remember being both impressed and inspired. Even though I was new to the advocacy space in Minnesota she treated me with respect and let me know that if I ever had questions about legislation, negotiations, processes, to ask. I had the pleasure of working on bills with her like securing Housing Infrastructure Bonds to build and preserve deeply affordable housing across all of Minnesota. I remember meetings to discuss strategy, phone calls to get and give updates, and celebrating on the last night of the session with hugs when the bill passed.

It is clear to me that Senator Dziedzic wanted everyone around her to succeed, lifting up new lawmakers like Senator Zaynab Mohamed, building a friendship with Senator Housley, working to find compromise with her Republican colleagues, and supporting and cheering on Senator Port in taking a leadership role of the Senate Housing Committee. But she also supported so many of us as advocates, she has left a lasting impression on me and for that I am so thankful. I told her mom and sister we would all carry Senator Dziedzic's legacy forward and that the work we do this legislative session, and every future session will continue to have her mark on it through all of us.

So, Senator Dziedzic, thank you. Thank you for being the OG Affordable Housing Champion in the Senate, thank you for being a guiding voice to the legislature, thank you for seeing advocates as partners, thank you for lifting up affordable housing so it got the attention it deserved, and thank you for being a mentor, to me and so many others. I will miss you greatly.

Sincerely,

Kari Johnson

Kari Johnson
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