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February 19, 2025

To: Chair Port and members of the Senate Housing & Homelessness
Prevention Committee

From: Rose Surma, Executive Director, Oasis Central Minnesota

Chair Port and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of Oasis Central Minnesota to express our strong support for SF 2214/HF 2276, which allocates funding for the Minnesota Homeless Study. Since 1991, this study has been an essential tool in understanding and addressing homelessness across the state. Its comprehensive, publicly available data—collected over three decades—has provided critical insights that drive meaningful change. Notably, this study is unique in its collaboration with tribal communities, setting it apart as a national model.

The data gathered through this study plays a vital role in identifying urgent needs, uncovering systemic barriers, and shaping effective policies and programs to address homelessness in Minnesota. Funding this study represents a high-value investment, as the insights it generates help guide strategic decisions, maximize resources, and ensure that efforts to combat homelessness are both effective and sustainable.

Oasis Central Minnesota provides emergency shelter and housing case management for both families and individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in Morrison County, Minnesota. Since we began this work a decade ago, data from the Minnesota Homeless Study has been instrumental in shaping our programs. This data informs the development of effective, targeted initiatives that address the root causes of homelessness and housing instability—leading to higher success rates in long-term housing stability and reducing the length of shelter stays for participants. Additionally, the study's data strengthens our ability to secure both public and private funding by ensuring our requests are well-informed, appropriately scaled, and aligned with the evolving needs of our community. Homelessness and housing insecurity are complex, rapidly changing challenges. Without continued funding for this study, we would face significant obstacles in both program delivery and securing the necessary resources to meet the full scope of our community's needs.

The Minnesota Homeless Study, along with its companion Reservation Homeless Study, is an indispensable resource for those addressing homelessness and housing instability. Its insights inform the work of state, county, and local governments, frontline service providers, and organizations that serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness—whether through housing assistance, healthcare, education, or transportation services.

Oasis Central Minnesota urges the committee to approve SF 2214/HF2276 to ensure that Minnesota continues to benefit from this critical research, which drives informed, effective solutions for homelessness across our state.

Respectfully,

Rose Surma
Executive Director