



Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Working to ensure everyone has a safe, decent, affordable place to call home

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Merger Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Paul— After 15 years of side-by-side partnership, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH) and the Affirmative Options Coalition have decided to merge. By joining our coalitions and streamlining functions we will have more capacity to achieve our complementary missions and common values:

- Every person deserves a safe, decent, affordable place to call home
- Nobody should lose their home because they lose work, become sick, or have a disability
- Public policy can help all people live in dignity and achieve their highest potential

Affirmative Options, a coalition of 50 nonprofit member organizations, is a state leader on public policy related to welfare and low-wage work. MCH, a coalition of 150 nonprofit member organizations, is a state leader on public policy related to housing and human services. Twenty-six of our members overlap currently.

Ultimately, housing stability is possible when incomes are raised or housing costs are lowered. Affirmative Options advocates and develops public policies to:

- Make work pay through adequate wages, tax credits, and access to training and education
- Make work possible through child care, health coverage, and transportation
- Prevent destitution when work is not an option by building a safety net for unemployed workers, children, and people living with disabilities

Our partnership has been instrumental to:

- Preventing the proposed elimination of General Assistance from the state budget
- Protecting MFIP cuts for families living with serious disabilities
- Preventing legislation that would have mandated drug testing for MFIP applicants, reduce MFIP eligibility, and disqualified too many applicants

At MCH, we have always believed that homelessness is not the problem; it is the result of other systemic problems. By merging, we have a greater opportunity to influence positive, proactive policy reforms in

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our overlapping areas of legislative advocacy. We can streamline our policy, communications, and field work to move beyond an aggressive and effective *defense* to really shaping solid public policy that *prevents* homelessness.

As a more robust organization, we look forward to advocating for the solutions—the affirmative options—that can be generated by our shared commitment to a state where everyone has a home and opportunity to thrive.

As of August 8, Katherine Wagoner from the Affirmative Options Coalition will move to MCH. Her new role will be the Director of Member Engagement at the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless. This position fills a critical gap for both coalitions working with a combined 184 organizations across the state.

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