

COC Resource – Letter to the Editor

Writing Tips and Guidelines

A Letter to the Editor (LTE) is a great way to generate media attention around our campaign issues. This is particularly poignant when organizations share the ways in which past budget allocations have funded beneficial community projects (new affordable housing units, supportive service programs, etc.). Listed below are guidelines for writing a LTE; general messaging and framing for your letters, as well as Homes for All specific talking points to emphasize the importance of statewide funding.

General Frame

The overall message of the LTE should be one of gratitude for any base funding received in the past or proposed for this year, but also shared concerns about missed opportunities without full allocation of requested funds. Some general angles to take may include:

- Affordable housing a statewide issue, H4A proposals benefit greater MN as well
- MN's housing continuum has strong bi-partisan support and public-private partnerships
- Return on investment: stable, affordable housing provides cascading individual and community benefits; leverages other resources
- Urgency: housing development is complicated and time-consuming, we need to invest now
 - Preservation key because we can't lose a single unit of affordable housing
 - Earlier interventions and prevention through supportive services critical
- Collective summary of the ways in which affordable housing is threatened this session, what we stand to lose if programs not fully funded to meet current and projected needs

*Reminder: the most important aspect is to ground your LTE or Op-Ed in an **experience/story**. Emphasize programs in your community, past successes, and current needs. Be brief, direct, and urgent.*

Item-Specific Talking Points – Homes for All (H4A)

These can be used as figures to supplement or enhance your stories. Feel free to use statistics from your own organizations as well.

H4A Bonding Request talking points (\$100M in Bonding)

- As much as possible emphasize the impact H4A will have in YOUR community. Personal stories are a powerful way to show the need
- \$100M in bonding would develop or preserve housing for approximately 3,000 households throughout MN
- In 2016, \$80M in state bonding leveraged \$300M in private and local funding - and more than \$233M in projects applied
- In 2014, every \$1 in state funding spent on gap financing for preservation leveraged \$3 in private capital
- Seniors are among the fastest growing population of Minnesotans experiencing homelessness. 150K older households in MN qualify for affordable senior housing with a supply of just 23,400 senior-only units

H4A Legislative Request talking points (\$30M in General Budget)

- As much as possible emphasize the impact H4A will have in YOUR community
- Personal stories are a powerful way to show the need
- Reducing homelessness cuts spending on jails, emergency rooms, shelters, and detox facilities
- Every \$1 invested in supportive housing returns \$1.44 in return investment
- Our proposed funding would provide housing & services for 20K Minnesotans in the greatest need
- In 2014, every \$1 in state funding for preservation of affordable housing leveraged \$3 in private capital and sustained \$4 in federal housing assistance

- Our proposed funding would build and preserve more than 550 units of housing throughout the state
 - Our proposed funding would help more than 1500 households buy a home
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Other Resources

Example LTEs:

[“Readers Write:” Minnesota Family Investment](#) by Sofia Everetts (First letter under “Requests for Legislators”)

[“In Response: Solutions to housing challenges a priority for nonmetro Minnesota lawmakers”](#) by Jeremy Schroeder,
Minnesota Housing Partnership

General LTE writing tips: <http://www.mhponline.org/policy/tools/communications/letters-to-the-editor>

Assistance in writing/media outreach: Kirsten Rokke, Communications Director, kirsten@mnhomelesscoalition.org

If your organization writes an op-ed/LTE, let Kirsten Rokke know—MCH wants to share your story!