

March 16, 2020

Dear Speaker Hortman and Majority Leader Gazelka,

Thank you for the swift response and bipartisan leadership during this unprecedented outbreak of the Coronavirus. As this pandemic has heightened over the weekend, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless has reached out to several of our members in both rural and metropolitan regions of the State.

We and others are working closely with the Minnesota Department of Health to monitor and prepare for a potential outbreak, while keeping the safety and health of our members working with individuals and families experiencing homelessness in mind. We need your help. As a budget and other responses to COVID-19 continue to develop, emergency shelters and services need to be considered as part of an integrated system. Shelters are operating at capacity with limited resources and staff during a crisis that recommends we keep our distance from one another and stay 'home'.

As you prepare to pass immediate funding solutions to address COVID-19, we strongly encourage the administration to include funding for homelessness and homelessness prevention as a top priority – thousands of individuals and families are already experiencing housing instability or are one paycheck away from homelessness.

This legislative session, the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless and many allies have prioritized:

- \$50M in funding to preserve and expand emergency shelters across the State
- \$15M for the Emergency Services Programs to support flex
- \$500M in bonds for housing

**As we all shift our thoughts to a rapid response to address COVID-19, three quickly deployable mitigation efforts can stabilize children, families, adults, seniors and veterans during this crisis:**

1. **Shelter and housing providers should be eligible providers under the healthcare funding.** They are on the front line of providing services to the most at-risk populations. Emergency shelters and services need resources that include health care providers, skilled nursing facilities, and others who serve and support high-risk, vulnerable populations. Like hospitals and skilled nursing facilities, people experiencing homelessness stay in congregate care settings and spend time in shared spaces while seeking critical services.
2. **Increase funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program.** MCH recognizes the need for efficient deployment of emergency rent and mortgage payments to prevent evictions and foreclosures through increasing funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP), administered through MN Housing. This program has the ability to increase capacity due to an already established network of providers across every county of the State.

3. **Temporarily suspend evictions and utility shutoffs** for electric, heat, water and sewer services to support health and hygiene during this unprecedented pandemic.

Thank you for your continued service and thoughtfulness as we all come together to ensure that every Minnesotan is safe, secure and healthy. Please reach out to Executive Director, Rhonda Ottteson (320-220-2816) should you need any further information regarding the specifics of the Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless request.

Thank you for your leadership,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda". The script is cursive and fluid.

Rhonda Ottteson  
Executive Director, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

cc: Office of Governor Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan  
Minnesota Department of Health, Commissioner Jan Malcolm  
Minnesota Department of Human Service, Commissioner Jodi Harpstead  
Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Commissioner Jennifer Ho