

March 16, 2020

Dear Senator Senjem and Representative Murphy,

Thank you for your response and leadership during this unprecedented outbreak of the Coronavirus.

On any given night, there are over 10,000 people experiencing homelessness. For too long, we have neglected to fund our emergency shelter system at the state level. We are now at crisis levels of people experiencing homelessness, with disturbing increases in the unsheltered homeless population. As this pandemic has heightened over the weekend, our legislative priorities are more important than ever. 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'.

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 (**HF3358 | SF3599**)
- \$15M for the Emergency Services Programs to support flexible solutions (**HF1805 | SF3918**)
- \$500M in bonds for housing (**HF3326 | SF3257**)

In Minnesota, we lack the capacity to meet the shelter and housing needs of our citizens across the state. Of the 87 counties in Minnesota, 80 lack enough shelter beds for individuals and 73 lack enough shelter beds for families. Minnesota can do better.

A \$50 Million Shelter Capital investment to preserve and expand emergency shelter beds will provide immediate and temporary housing for our most vulnerable Minnesotans. Investing in our emergency shelters and expanding/preserving beds will empower communities across the state to find innovative, flexible solutions that address homelessness in their communities. Emergency shelter beds generate a short-term solution for individuals and families sleeping outside. They are the starting point to gaining long-term stability. Emergency shelter should be adequately funded so individuals and families can move into their permanent place to call home.

As you prepare to pass a bonding bill and supplemental budget we strongly encourage legislation to include funding for homelessness as a top priority – thousands of individuals and families are already experiencing housing instability or are one paycheck away from homelessness.

Now is the time to invest in emergency shelters. We need a place for individuals to temporarily stay safe in this crisis. **Please support HF3358 | SF3599; your leadership can save lives.**

Thank you,



Rhonda Otteson
Executive Director, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

cc: House and Senate Leadership