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Contact:

Senta Leff - senta@mnhomelesscoalition.org | 651-428-9153

Kirsten Rokke - kirsten@mnhomelesscoalition.org | 319-961-1402

MINNESOTA COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS PROPOSES A \$15M INCREASE TO EMERGENCY SHELTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – In recent months the media has given attention to the Franklin-Hiawatha homeless encampment, or Wall of Forgotten Natives, which has elevated the need for accessible and additional emergency shelter space. “The Wall” is a remarkable display of self governance, organization and determination, with representation from more than 17 different tribes. Together, they have forced all of us to face the reality of homelessness. They have revealed what we can no longer pretend doesn’t exist.

While the Franklin-Hiawatha encampment has received a great deal of press - it is far from the only encampment in Minnesota. The **Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless** acknowledges that this unfortunate reality isn’t specific to the metro, but is a statewide issue that requires statewide solutions. For those living and/or working within the homelessness community, this has been a reality for far too long.

In Minnesota, 67 of 87 counties do not have a fixed site shelter, which means that the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness in our state are without access to immediate shelter. This creates an unnecessary burden for the twenty counties that do have shelters, as they are forced to operate over capacity and without adequate resources. Families who are in desperate need of shelter are forced to relocate, further disrupting their lives in hopes of gaining access to a bed in a neighboring county. Emergency shelters are a final resort for an already urgent problem, accessed by individuals only when all other supports have failed them.

"In rural communities, where the nearest emergency shelter may be hundreds of miles away, resilient parents and community members find ways to stay warm: they sleep in fish houses scattered across our 10,000 frozen lakes. They put their children to bed in heated dog houses after the lights are turned off on rural properties. They sneak into local hospital beds or walk 24-7 Walmarts until the sun comes up. Homelessness has NO HOME in Minnesota." - Senta Leff, executive director, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless

Without providing our most vulnerable community members with immediate access to shelters that are culturally relevant and appropriate, our state will continue to operate at a deficit when it comes to addressing homelessness.

The **Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless** believes that affordable housing is essential for communities and economies to grow. In partnership with the Homes for All Coalition we’ve set our biggest and boldest two-year legislative agenda, including a \$15M increase in the Emergency Services Program. We know that where we live impacts everything. Home is where children learn, workers earn, seniors thrive, and how communities prosper.

Our legislative agenda for 2019-2020 strengthens Minnesota’s full housing continuum - from emergency shelter to affordable homeownership - in every corner of the state. Minnesota will thrive when everyone has a place to call home.

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