

March 16, 2020



Dear Speaker Hortman and Majority Leader Gazelka,

Thank you for your leadership on Minnesota's response to COVID-19. As a coalition of more than 250+ advocates, we share your concern that our State prioritize those most vulnerable and most likely to experience dire health and economic consequences. As you prepare to pass immediate funding solutions to address COVID-19, the statewide Homes for All coalition strongly encourages you 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.

Ensuring housing stability is a health mitigation strategy for individuals and the general public, but the current COVID-19 outbreak puts additional strain on already limited resources and poses even greater challenges for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. People experiencing homelessness and housing instability often stay in congregate care settings and spend time in shared spaces while seeking critical services. As the virus spreads, these individuals are at increased risk of exposure because of the nature of their shared living arrangement and inability to self-isolate.

Increased funding for the Emergency Service Program has been a top priority of the Homes for All coalition this session. As a result of the COVID-19 virus, the need for immediate resources to bolster the state's emergency services and shelters is even more critical. **It is urgent that funding for and other responses to COVID-19 recognize emergency shelters and services as a part of an integrated system that includes health care providers, skilled nursing facilities, and others who serve and support high-risk vulnerable populations.** We also urge you to consider significant **funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)**, which is well suited for one-time emergency funding. It can provide emergency rental assistance to Minnesotans unable to make ends meet due to illness, loss of income as a result of the economic fallout, and school closures. We also request that you issue **statewide eviction and foreclosure moratoriums**, as well as **moratoriums on utility shutoffs**, as part of your response.

These funding and policy tools will have an immediate impact. They will keep people housed and provide critical supports for sheltered individuals in this precarious time. As advocates that see the realities of the housing and homeless crisis firsthand every day, we know that the needs are great, growing and consequential if we don't act boldly now.

Homes for All is grateful for your thoughtful consideration and hopes that homelessness and housing will be included as part of the COVID-19 funding response. Please reach out to the policy co-chairs, Libby Murphy (612-716-9703) or Kari Johnson (612-387-6398) should you need any further information regarding the specifics of the Homes for All request.

Sincerely,

Allison Streich & Pastor Sue Koesterman
Homes for All Co-Chairs

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