



July 14, 2020

Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Tina Smith
Representative Angie Craig
Representative Tom Emmer
Representative Jim Hagedorn
Representative Betty McCollum
Representative Ilhan Omar
Representative Colin Peterson
Representative Dean Phillips
Representative Pete Stauber

Via email

Re: Support Emergency Rent Assistance, Evictions and Foreclosure Moratorium, and Homelessness Prevention Funding for COVID-19 Relief in Minnesota

Dear Senators and Representatives:

As Congress works to prepare what may be a final COVID-19 response package, we again urge you to include these priorities:

- Emergency rental assistance at \$100 billion,
- A uniform national evictions and foreclosure moratorium, and
- \$11.5 billion to support those experiencing homelessness, with emergency solutions grants

The Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home (OSAH-MN) is a federal advocacy organization working to meet the housing needs of under resourced Minnesotans. We recognize the persistent racial disparities in access to stable housing and are focused on how housing insecurity is often linked to inadequate access to employment, mental health services, education, and other core needs. Like the national campaign, opportunityhome.org, OSAH-MN member organizations work at the intersection of housing and other issues, including mental health, social services, civic education, local government, and more. Our members have state-wide or multi-jurisdictional service and membership.

We have written to you before, on April 8, asking you to prioritize COVID-19-related housing stability needs. Information from Minnesota continues to indicate high need for housing supports and extreme concern that Minnesota will experience an evictions cliff as soon as federal stimulus concludes. In Minnesota:

- A report by HousingLink Research released June 30, 2020, indicates the precariousness of low- and moderate-income renters state-side:
 - **Just 72% of low- and moderate-income renters remain current on rent since beginning of pandemic;** this compares to 91% of renters able to pay rent prior to the pandemic.
 - **Only 20% of respondents expected to be back to work at full capacity by July 31; 70% - a hugely alarming number – have lost their job or hours during the pandemic**
 - 26% of respondents do not believe they will be able to continue paying rent after July 31. This number does not include those who will pay rent at the expense of other bills, like food and medical care.
- Greater Twin Cities United Way, which hosts a 211 line for information and referrals, reports:
 - **Rental assistance has consistently been the #1 issue for calls since March;** this was not the case prior to COVID
 - Despite state and federal supports, we have seen a consistent increase in rental assistance calls March – May; 200% over the same time period last year
- **Local governments in Minnesota have been establishing new emergency rental assistance funds,** utilizing CARES act and their own declining local revenues, **but many of these funds have been already depleted or are expiring quickly:**
 - Minneapolis established an emergency rental assistance fund of \$3 million in April; with over 7,000 applicants, the funds were gone within days.
 - Bloomington established an emergency rental assistance fund in April of \$200,000, which was very quickly utilized (roughly \$16K in April, \$162K in May, and \$36K in June) forcing the City to allocate an additional \$270,000 for emergency housing assistance
 - The Northfield HRA, which increased emergency rental assistance to support area residents, has seen increased applications (and spend) from approximately \$1,500-\$2,000 per month to \$25,000-\$30,000 per month, continuing this pace in July. These funds are only expended after county, other emergency assistance, or utility assistance is accessed first by residents.

The CARES Act's stimulus checks and expanded unemployment benefits have helped, but these income boosts are coming to an end soon. In addition, many people with the greatest needs are facing challenges in accessing these resources, and even those who were successful will still be severely rent-burdened and at risk of homelessness unless Congress provides targeted assistance.

We support the critical housing resources provided in H.R. 7301 and the HEROES Act, specifically emergency rental assistance at \$100 billion, a uniform national evictions and foreclosure moratorium, and \$11.5 billion to support those experiencing homelessness, with



emergency solutions grants. We urge your support to prioritize these COVID-19 health and housing supports in any final COVID-19 response package.

The signatories below are members of the Minnesota Chapter of the Opportunity Starts at Home campaign; we thank you for your work to date and look forward to continuing to work with you.

Sincerely,

Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home (OSAH-MN)

Catholic Charities of St Paul and Minneapolis
Community Stabilization Project
Guild
HOME Line
Minnesota Association of Community Health Centers
Mental Health Resources
Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP)
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Minnesota
New American Development Center (NADC)
St Paul NAACP

See OSAH-MN Letter to Minnesota Members of Congress dated 04.08.20: <https://files.constantcontact.com/09ab5193401/a005ff0d-c092-47b3-aa77-f965bf539c0b.pdf>

See HousingLink's research, Paying Rent During the COVID-19 Pandemic, released 06.30.20: https://housinglink.org/docs/default-source/mainlibrary/payingrentduringthepandemic-june2020.pdf?sfvrsn=163e6fda_2

See NLIHC's research support need for \$100 billion for emergency rental assistance: <https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Need-for-Rental-Assistance-During-the-COVID-19-and-Economic-Crisis.pdf>

See Minnesota Housing Partnership's snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on Renters in Key Occupations: <https://www.mhponline.org/images/COVID19/COVID19Renters.png>

See Emergency Assistance Fund Fact Sheet: <https://www.opportunityhome.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Emergency-Assistance-Fund-Fact-Sheet-FINAL.pdf>

