



Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
*Working to ensure that everyone has a safe,
decent, affordable place to call home*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Committee to Hear Testimony about MHFA's Budget at Noon Thursday

St. Paul, Minn. (March 7, 2005) – The Senate Environment, Agriculture and Economic Development Finance Committee will hold a hearing noon Thursday, March 10 in Room 107 at the Capitol about the impact of Minnesota Housing Finance Agency's budget.

"Cutting MHFA's budget by 20 percent is pennywise and pound foolish. For people experiencing homelessness, affordable housing is the most common barrier to stable housing," said Michael Dahl, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless Executive Director. "We hope the Legislature will take a broader view on how to end homelessness."

Commissioner Tim Marx will present the Administration's proposed budget. Duluth Mayor Herb Bergson, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund President Warren Hanson and others will highlight the budget's impact on Minnesotans, specifically touching upon the governor's plan to end long-term homelessness and the reductions in the Housing Challenge program.

In his budget, Governor Pawlenty undermines his own stated housing objectives and sends mixed signals on his commitment to meeting Minnesotans' housing needs. While the Governor shifts resources to assist the 4,000 households currently experiencing long-term homelessness, in his proposed cuts, he increases the chances that more will be added to their ranks.

"Pawlenty's proposed housing budget makes important strides toward ending long-term homelessness, but with his budget the governor helps the homeless at the expense of low-income working families, seniors, disabled individuals and others," said Chip Halbach, HousingMinnesota Executive Director. "This is shortsighted. Without continued funding for workforce housing programs, many families will end up paying substantial portions of their income for housing, leaving inadequate resources for medical care, food and other basic needs. Some will even become homeless."

The committee hearing is part of a day-long effort to educate lawmakers about the need for increased revenue for housing and homelessness programs. Hundreds of Minnesotans will meet with their legislators and hold a rally in the rotunda at 1:15 p.m. to urge lawmakers to make housing and homelessness a priority this session.

HousingMinnesota is a multi-year education, organizing and advocacy campaign that seeks to dramatically increase the preservation and production of affordable housing in Minnesota by raising public awareness, educating policy makers on housing issues, and translating the needs of people affected into community action. HousingMinnesota is a program of the Minnesota Housing Partnership. For more information go to www.housingminnesota.org.

The Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless' mission is to generate policies, community support and local resources for housing and services to end homelessness in Minnesota. For more information go to www.mnhomelesscoalition.org.

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Schedule

- 9:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. **Legislative meetings.** Constituents will meet with their legislators throughout the morning.
- Noon – 2:00 p.m. **Senate Hearing on cuts to the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency**
Room 107, State Capitol. This is an important hearing of the Environmental, Agriculture, and Economic Development Budget committee.
- 1:15 – 2:00 p.m. **Rally in the Rotunda!** Speakers include:
Rev. Al Gallmon, Fellowship Missionary Baptist Church
Julia Dinsmore, Activist, Poet, and Musician
Lynn Braveheart, Ain Dah Yung
Laura Kadwell, Director, Ending Long-term Homelessness
Shelley McNamara, Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless
Alan Arthur, Central Community Housing Trust
Tony Sertich, State Legislator
- 2:00 – 2:45 p.m. **Legislative Meetings.** Due to legislators' committee obligations, a few constituent meetings had to be scheduled after the rally. Please be sure to attend!

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