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March 15, 2020

The Honorable Tim Walz
The Honorable Peggy Flanagan
Office of Governor Tim Walz and Lt Gov Peggy Flanagan
130 State Capitol
75 Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
St Paul, MN. 55155

The Honorable Melissa Hortman
Speaker of the House
461 State Office Building
St Paul, MN. 55155

The Honorable Paul Gazelka
Senate Majority Leader
95 University Ave W
Minnesota Senate Bldg, Room 3113
St Paul, MN. 55155

RE: Prioritize Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP) as COVID-19 response

Dear Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, Speaker Hortman, and Majority Leader Gazelka:

Thank you for your leadership on Minnesota's response to COVID-19. As affordable housing providers, advocates and leaders, we share your concern that our State prioritize those most vulnerable and most likely to experience dire health and economic consequences.

Many low-income Minnesotans face loss of income as we take protective measures as a State and country to reduce risk to health and our healthcare system. For low-income Minnesotans, any break in income can have serious economic consequences, making it even harder to pay for already unaffordable rent. Ensuring stable housing is important for our individual and community health; it is critical we minimize disruptions to housing that could make it even harder for Minnesotans to mitigate the threat of COVID-19.

Approximately 250,000 Minnesotans make at or below the minimum wage. These individuals and their families are at high risk of becoming homeless, as they are most vulnerable to health and economic harms. Housing assistance is critical to prevent homelessness and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

To responsibly support Minnesotans at this time of crisis, **the State must dedicate \$100 million in emergency COVID-19 funds for housing supports through the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)**. \$100 million will provide one month of FHPAP, at an estimated rate of \$400 per month per household, for 250,000 families. In reality, short-term funding of several months may be needed.

We ask that you **use funding dedicated to COVID-19 from the Supplemental Budget to provide housing support with FHPAP**. We recommend that Minnesota Housing Commissioner Jennifer Ho be provided full authority to make rule and other changes to FHPAP, to ensure these critical resources are deployed as quickly and flexibly as possible.

We are focused on preventing the cascade of impacts in the housing industry that occurred during the foreclosure crisis of 2006-2008, resulting in the escalation of deep racial disparities in our state. We hope to work closely with you to address these issues and ensure that our most vulnerable, low-income households have access to stable housing while we navigate this crisis.

Sincerely,

Anne Mavity, Executive Director, Minnesota Housing Partnership
Jenny Larson, Executive Director, Three Rivers Community Action
Deidre Schmidt, President and CEO, CommonBond Communities
Alan Arthur, President and CEO, Aeon
Paul Williams, President and CEO, Project for Pride in Living
Lee Blons, President, Beacon Interfaith Housing Collaborative
Chris Coleman, President and CEO, Twin Cities Habitat
Warren Hanson, President and CEO, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund
Ellen Sahli, President and CEO, Family Housing Fund
Chris Coleman, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity
Buffy Beranek, Southeast MN Multi-county HRA
Cristin Incitti, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity Minnesota
Barb Jeanetta, Executive Director, Alliance Housing
Jim Roth, Executive Director, Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers

cc:

Minnesota Housing Commissioner Jennifer Ho