



May 2021

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: Housing priorities of the HoUsed Campaign

Dear Senators and Representatives

Housing instability is felt across the state in both rural and urban communities, but the need is most urgent for the people with low incomes and communities of color. This was a crisis before the COVID-19 pandemic and demands urgent action at the Federal level. The Minnesota Chapter of Opportunity Starts at Home urges you to ensure that substantial investments in affordable housing are included in an infrastructure bill.

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](http://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.

One in four renter households are cost-burdened across the state. In Minnesota, analysis from the Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP) found that median rents increased by 14% since 2000, but that median income decreased by 1%. These long-term trends are exacerbated by aging housing stock and the scarcity of very affordable housing. An alarming 554,272 Minnesota Households pay more than 30 percent of their income toward housing costs, putting them at risk of being unable to afford basic needs like food and medicine, 232,840 are severely cost burdened and pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

The MN Chapter of the Opportunity Starts at Home strongly encourages Congress to tackle the following issues this year, including – for those appropriate - in an infrastructure package:

1. **Bridge the gap between incomes and housing costs** by expanding rental assistance to every eligible household. Today, only one in four households eligible for rental assistance receive it.

2. **Expand and preserve the supply of rental homes** affordable to people with the lowest incomes. There is no state or congressional district in America with enough supply of affordable housing for families with the lowest incomes. This must include at least \$70 billion to repair public housing for current and future generations and at least \$40 billion for the National Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve homes affordable to people with the lowest incomes.
3. **Provide emergency rental assistance to households in crisis** by creating a national housing stabilization fund. Millions of households are one financial shock away from economic hardship that could quickly spiral out of control. Learn more about how we can stabilize households during a crisis.
4. **Strengthen and enforce renter protections** and advance anti-racist policies. The power imbalance between renters and landlords put renters at risk of housing instability and homelessness, and long-standing racial inequities harm Black people, Native Americans, and Latinos.

Housing is infrastructure and sets the foundation for future success. The lack of stable housing has a cascading impact on educational outcomes, health and especially mental health needs, and economic opportunities. Our coalition reflects the intersectional nature of housing issues and includes housing advocates, mental health agencies, civil rights organizations, and faith-based groups dedicated to ending homelessness and housing instability.

Thank you for your time and support.

Sincerely,

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

Affordable Housing Connections  
Alliance Housing Inc.  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul & Minneapolis  
East Metro Civic Alliance (EMCA)  
Guild  
HOME Line  
Integrated Community Solutions, Inc  
Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing (MICAH)  
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
Minnesota Housing Partnership (MHP)  
NAMI Minnesota  
Our Spring Lake Store LLC  
Project for Pride in Living (PPL)  
The Arc Minnesota  
Voices for Racial Justice

Encl:

[MHP's 2021 State of the State of Housing](#)