

Candidate Questionnaire on Housing Issues

2022



Leigh Finke

City/Town: St. Paul

Legislative District: HD66A

Party: DFL

Candidate responses in italics.

1. In July 2021, a [national poll](#) found that 68% of the public believes that elected officials are not paying enough attention to the rising cost of housing and ensuring everyone can afford a place to live. **What do you believe is the role of government in ensuring everyone has a place to call home?**

The government has a role in keeping housing both affordable and accessible. Keeping single family homes in the market and out of investor/company hands is something the state government can help with. Making sure that affordable rental housing is developed and truly available is too. There are many ways that we can help.

2. Nearly all counties in Minnesota (92%) are not able to provide sufficient shelter or temporary housing to those who are homeless. **What will you do to end homelessness?**

Everything I can. Housing our neighbors is not just a civic duty but a moral one. I am committed to ensuring accessible affordable and available housing units are provided.

3. Emergency rental assistance keeps people stably housed, as we saw with federal pandemic-related funding. Historically, nonpayment of rent is the most common reason landlords evict their tenants. During times of financial crisis, families without access to financial resources may be displaced, evicted, or even become homeless. **What will you do to prevent evictions?**

Eviction moratoriums are helpful in times of hardship, and I support them. I also support rent control as a means to give renters stability in their homes. When financial hardship befalls individuals or families, state or local governments should have mechanisms in place to provide necessary support. We should do everything we can to ensure that we are not adding to the numbers of houseless neighbors.

4. Minnesota's housing crisis disproportionately harms families of color, especially Black and Indigenous households. Minnesota is one of the worst states in the nation for racial disparities in homeownership. Additionally, 58 percent of Black renters are paying more than they can afford on housing costs. **What meaningful steps will you take to eliminate racial disparities in housing?**

Housing discrimination is a long-standing problem that rises to a new level of urgency as the housing shortage continues to expand. Keeping housing stock available to single family owners/renters, out of the rental or vacation rental markets, and out of investor owned hands is an important tool for expanding home ownership. We also must ensure that housing that is made for low-income communities is actually going to those who need it, not those who can find ways into it. Racial discrimination in renting should be penalized whenever it is discovered, in a manner that will effectively change patterns in landlord behavior.

5. There are approximately 170,000 renter households in the state that earn less than \$31,200 per year. But rental assistance is only available to one out of every four income-qualifying households. Even though more than 100,000 lowest income households need homes, the state only supports the production of 100 homes each year for these families. **What will you do to support the housing needs of those at the lowest income level in Minnesota?**

Assistance programs must be accessible to everyone who needs them, and the first thing we can do is create a system for outreach and navigation that expands existing benefits, and expand those programs to make it possible for everyone to compete for homes. We also will need to build new units. We need more options, and those options must be made available to the communities that have historically lacked access to them: people of color and low income Minnesotans.

6. Energy efficiency improvements in multifamily buildings and weatherizing single family homes improve indoor air quality, eliminate drafts, and protect residents from extreme cold and heat—delivering health benefits and lower health care costs. **What strategies do you support to improve housing conditions and reduce utility costs?**

State government needs to put forward a robust and effective efficiency program for existing multifamily units. This is essential for both individual well-being and health and for climate mitigation. It is low hanging fruit, and whether the state/local governments run it or incentivize it for owners, it simply has to be done.

7. Minnesota's home values are increasing rapidly, constraining low- and middle-income families from achieving affordable homeownership, including more than 64,000 households of color. **What steps will you take to increase**

opportunities for renters to purchase homes, condos, or cooperative ownership models?

I am a renter with fading hopes of buying a home in my district, and I very much understand the difficulty of trying to buy while watching home prices increase. Rental stability is an important way to decrease the pressure on renters feeling the urgency. We can provide that through rent control measures and renter bill of rights. Alternative ownership models and coop communities will also become essential as the housing crises we face continue in the coming years.

8. Including the recommendations of the community when developing policies and programs is a best practice for effective and lasting solutions. **How will you include those most impacted by housing needs in developing and implementing housing solutions?**

I am a renter and so many of my community are. Housing access and homelessness are major problems in the trans and queer community, and I feel the need to represent us, as well as every other community that faces these challenges. Housing solutions cannot be top down and dictated. That will never succeed. We must be inclusive and available to those effected if we are to work through these problems.