



February 1, 2022

U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar
302 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

U.S. Senator Tina Smith
309 Hart Senate Office building
Washington, DC 20510

Via email

Re: Build Back Better

Dear Senator Klobuchar and Senator Smith:

We understand that a new strategy for reconciliation is to significantly scale back Build Back Better, focusing on just a few priorities. We urge you to strongly advocate for housing to be included as one of those top priorities.

We have requested, in previous correspondence, that you do all possible to ensure housing remains a priority. Minnesota families are facing a historic housing shortage, with deepening race-based disparities – especially concerning for a state already ranked as one of the worst in nation for racial inequity in housing, education, wealth, and many other areas. On January 27, [Zillow reported](#) that the U.S. housing market has doubled in value since the Great Recession – for many families, that means that housing is *even more out of reach*.

While Minnesota local government jurisdictions continue to increase investments in housing, and Governor Walz has proposed significant funds and policy for housing, we need the federal government to do its part. Federal housing programs such as those proposed in the House approved Build Back Better bill, continue to be the most important – and greatest – support for housing needs in Minnesota and across this nation. We ask that you include robust housing investments in a scaled back Build Back Better bill, including investments in public housing, rental assistance, homeownership supports, investment in the Housing Credit, HOME, rural housing, and tribal housing programs among others.

Here are some new items of note about housing in Minnesota:

- **Federal ERA Funds Have Been Depleted.** On January 26, 2022, Minnesota Housing announced mid-day that RentHelpMN was closed to new applications as of January 28 at 9:00 pm. In total, Minnesota Housing received a total of \$537.5 million in federal Emergency Rental Assistance resources, plus an additional \$27 million from the state Fiscal Recovery Fund, in addition to allocations to local jurisdictions. These funds were expended in approximately a nine-month period, indicative of the great need Minnesota households still have for available and affordable housing. The abrupt end to this program will leave thousands of Minnesotans, impacted by the ongoing pandemic, behind on rent and facing eviction.
- **Minnesota business leaders prioritize housing as a top issue.** In a December 2021 report, the Governor’s Council on Economic Expansion, a group of Minnesota’s business leaders, listed “produce new affordable housing” as the first out of five top priorities. The recommendation included increasing access to homeownership for BIPOC communities and preserving existing housing.



- As the pandemic continues, **housing's relationship to health** is increasingly significant. In Minnesota, over 130,000 renters pay more than half of their income for housing or have severe cost burden. Almost 1/3, or 30% of all Minnesota Black renters experience severe cost burden, while 22% of white renters are in this category. Renters who pay more than half of their limited incomes on rent are [23 percent more likely](#) to face food insecurity. Children in families experiencing food and housing insecurity are more likely to experience [poor health outcomes](#), including developmental delays, behavioral problems, and chronic health conditions.

We urge your support for Minnesota families through significant housing investments. We ask that you let the White House and Senate leadership know of your support for housing investments. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Affordable Housing Connections
African Career Education & Resource, Inc. (ACER)
Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
Alliance Housing, Inc.
Artspace Projects
Avivo
Big Brothers Big Sisters Twin Cities
Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism
Bush Companies
Center for Economic Inclusion
Chisago County HRA-EDA
Churches United for the Homeless
City of Bloomington
City of Minneapolis
City of Rochester
City of Winona
CommonBond Communities
Community Mediation and Restorative Services
Community Stabilization Project
CSH
Dominium
D.W. Jones, Inc.
East Metro Civic Alliance
Envision
Fairview Health Services
Freedom from the Streets
Fresh Energy
Grace House
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund
Guild
HACER MN
Harrison Neighborhood Association
Hennepin County Board of Commissioners
Housing Justice Center
HOME Line
Integrated Community Solutions
Isuroon
Lakes and Pines CAC, Inc.



Landon Group
Lincoln Park Resource Center
The Lao Center of Minnesota
Laura Baker Services Association
LISC Twin Cities
Live Well Winona
Mental Health Resources, Inc.
Metropolitan Consortium of Community Developers (MCCD)
MICAH (Metropolitan Interfaith Council on Affordable Housing)
Midwest Minnesota Community Development Corporation
Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe
Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council
Minneapolis Regional Chamber of Commerce
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless (MCH)
Minnesota Homeownership Center
MHP (Minnesota Housing Partnership)
NAMI Minnesota
New American Development Center
Northside Achievement Zone
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council (NRRC)
Our Spring Lake Store
Park Plaza Cooperative
Phyllis Wheatley Community Center
Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association
PRG, Inc.
Project for Pride in Living, Inc.
St Stephen's Human Services
Schafer Richardson
SEMMCHRA
Seward Redesign, Inc.
Solid Ground
Somali American Social Service Association
Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership
Touchstone Mental Health
Three Rivers Community Action
Urban Homeworks
Urban Works
Winona County Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee
White Earth Investment Initiative

Cc:

Report of the Governor's Council on Economic Expansion: https://mn.gov/deed/assets/Governors%20Council%20on%20Economic%20Expansion%20Recommendations_ACC_tcm1045-511480.pdf

Minnesota Budget Project: COVID-induced recession is the most unequal on record. <https://www.mnbudgetproject.org/reportdetails/covid-induced-recession-is-most-unequal-on-record>

MHP 2021 State of the State's Housing
<https://www.mhponline.org/publications/2021-state-of-the-state-s-housing>

Minnesota Housing, [10 Trends in Housing 2020](#)