



Saint Louis County

Administration • 100 North Fifth Avenue West, Room 202 • Duluth, MN 55802
Phone: (218) 726-2450 • stlouiscountymn.gov

February 18, 2026

Senator Lindsey Port, Chair
Housing and Homelessness Prevention Committee
Minnesota Senate

Delivered via email: jack.dudley@mnsenate.gov

Re: SF3596

Dear Chair Port,

St. Louis County commends the State Legislature for considering prioritizing available general fund dollars to meet the immediate needs of individuals in communities statewide facing housing instability, eviction notices, tenants with challenges covering rent and related resulting emergencies. In St. Louis County, our current state emergency assistance funds are set to run out next month without the next allocation available until July 1. We are seeing record utilization for our warming centers countywide this winter which is one barometer for the level of need present in our communities.


Every year, there has been an increase in people using the service. In our Duluth warming center, YTD as of February 11th, 610 unduplicated individuals stayed at the warming center for this 2025-2026 season. The Warming Center averaged 89 people a night in January and a year-to date average of 83. Over half of the people served have identified mental health needs, and over 43% have substance use disorders. Additionally, approximately 15% have developmental disabilities and 87 are seniors. 66% of the Warming Center clients report some kind of disability. The people who use this service have complex needs, and the capacity is 93, including those served and staff & volunteers.

The same is true across our Iron Range cities and communities served by AEOA through Bill's House, which has 12 beds, and Home on the Range, which opened more recently with 56 beds, yet people are still turned away. As of February 11, 514 people have been turned away and winter is not over. 60% of the people who use these services have mental health issues and the substance use issue also continues to rise. The need for shelter has also increased for people with high physical health needs which requires more time to provide care.

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The magnitude of these challenges for communities across Minnesota demonstrate that any additional funds for emergency housing needs will be utilized through existing channels – county eligibility workers and the community organizations we already contract with – to meet tangible needs and ensure vulnerable people remain sheltered. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Annie Harala in black ink.

Commissioner Annie Harala

Handwritten signature of Ashley Grimm in black ink.

Commissioner Ashley Grimm

Handwritten signature of Patrick Boyle in black ink.

Commissioner Patrick Boyle