

# MINNESOTA'S



## COVID-19 RECOVERY BUDGET

### **Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness**

The Minnesota Interagency Council on Homelessness is a Cabinet-level body comprised of 13 State agencies, the Metropolitan Council, and the Office of Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. It is accountable for leading the State's efforts to achieve housing stability for all Minnesotans. The Council is led by Lieutenant Governor Flanagan and co-chaired by Human Services Commissioner Harpstead and Housing Commissioner Ho. The Governor's biennial budget proposal, Minnesota's COVID-19 Recovery Budget, includes a number of proposals across Council agencies that support the state's work to prevent and end homelessness.

Housing ends homelessness and shelter saves lives. It is possible to effectively end homelessness. This does not mean that housing crises will never occur, but that we have resources to prevent homelessness whenever possible, and if it does occur, to make homelessness rare, brief, and non-recurring. In fact, the Federal government has confirmed that most of Minnesota's Continuum of Care regions have reached this goal for Veterans experiencing homelessness. It is time to do so for all Minnesotans. Homelessness disproportionately impacts Minnesotans who are Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQ community members, or those living with a disabling condition. After years of dramatic growth in the number of Minnesotans facing homelessness without shelter, it is critically important to strengthen shelter capacity statewide so that more Minnesotans who need it have access to a safe place to stay. In total, the Governor's budget proposes a historic increase of more than \$36 million over the biennium for programs that support people experiencing homelessness and \$100 million investment in Housing Infrastructure Bonds to support the preservation of existing housing and the creation of new homes for all.

### **Minnesota Department of Veteran Affairs**

#### **Ending Veteran Homelessness: \$6.3 million support and expand Veteran Homelessness efforts**

Every Minnesotan—especially those who have served our country—should have a safe and stable place to call home. MDVA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans in Minnesota. Specifically, it is dedicated to becoming the fourth state in the nation to reach functional zero statewide. Through a collaboration with numerous public, private and non-profit partners, a dedicated internal staff of four FTEs, and a robust Homeless Veteran Registry database, we have begun to address the problem. But to achieve the goal of functional zero for Veteran homelessness, the program needs housing vouchers and wrap around services for

Veterans and former Service members who are not eligible for federal housing assistance. COVID-19 has made the issue even more urgent.

## **Minnesota Housing**

### **Provide Housing Stability to Families and Children: \$3.5 million increase for Homework Starts with Home**

In 2019, more than 9,000 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in over 1,350 schools and 307 school districts in 78 of Minnesota's 87 counties. Homework Starts with Home is an evidence-based initiative that provides assistance to highly mobile families with school-aged children. An additional \$3.5 million will serve about 325 additional families, providing housing stability and improved school attendance.

### **Prevent Family Homelessness: \$4 million increase for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program**

More than 3,400 families experience homelessness on any given night in Minnesota. When families become homeless or are at imminent risk of homelessness, the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program steps in to provide support services, short-term rent assistance, security deposits, utility assistance and more. This helps make homelessness rare, brief and one-time. A \$4 million increase will serve an estimated 2,000 additional households around the state through counties, tribal nations, and nonprofit organizations.

### **Support People with Serious Mental Illness: \$500,000 increase for Bridges, the state's rental assistance program**

This increase will help people with serious mental illness live in integrated settings in their communities with housing stability that improves access to supportive mental health services. The resources will provide rental assistance to an estimated 70 additional householders and help Minnesotans with a mental illness stay out of homelessness and institutions, including correctional facilities.

### **Preserve and Expand Access to Affordable Housing for all Minnesotans: \$100 million for Housing Infrastructure Bonds (HIB)**

The preservation of existing housing and creation of new homes for Minnesotans across all incomes and in all areas of the state is a priority for Governor Walz and Lieutenant Governor Flanagan. \$100 million for HIB will leverage additional private development funds and preserve federal dollars for rental assistance while creating or preserving housing. The types of housing that can be financed with HIB include: permanent supportive housing, homeownership opportunities, senior housing, rehab of existing housing and a new eligible use focused on new construction with rents affordable to those making the least.

## **Minnesota Department of Human Services**

### **Support for people experiencing homelessness: \$10 million increase for the Emergency Services Program**

The increasing rate of Minnesotans who are homeless and without shelter across the state highlights the critical role of emergency shelters in the continuum of homeless services.

Emergency Services Program funds are highly flexible fund that can support emergency shelter. This additional investment could be used to for a number of eligible activities, including additional shelter beds, hotel/motel vouchers, and increased staffing for housing access.

**Connection to Housing: \$10 million increase for Community Living Infrastructure Grants**

This funding allows counties and tribes to more fully integrate housing into their human services work, and this additional investment expands funding to 40 counties and seven tribes that are currently not served by the grant. An estimated additional 8,000 Minnesotans would be served with this increased funding through the work of the grant-funded Outreach/Housing Resource Specialists, and individuals overseeing the Administration/Monitoring of the Housing Support program.

**Data: \$1 million to establish base budget for the Homeless Information Management System (HMIS)**

Reliable funding for HMIS will enhance the system’s capacity to help the state and providers target state and federal homelessness resources more strategically. Consistent investment in the base for the biennium will be instrumental in helping the state better understand the homeless population and connect individuals and families to needed resources.

**Housing Stabilization: \$466,000 to increase staffing for the Housing Stabilization Services Medical Assistance Benefit**

Housing Stabilization Services is a new Medical Assistance benefit designed to help people with disabilities and older adults find and keep housing. The service aims to support a person’s transition into stable housing, increase long-term stability in housing, and avoid future periods of homelessness or institutionalization. This funding will support two new full-time staff to process applications and support providers seeking to deliver these new Medical Assistance housing benefits.

**Minnesota Office of Higher Education**

**Supporting students: \$1.3 million for the Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students Expansion**

Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students (EAPS) is a grant program for postsecondary institutions across Minnesota to allocate grant funds on a matching basis to schools with a demonstrable homeless population to provide financial resources to students experiencing severe financial hardships that may prevent them from continuing their post-secondary education. The grant funds can support food, housing, transportation, and other costs. This additional funding will expand the number of institutions receiving grants and increases the amount each institution can request to support their students.