

March 18, 2024

Dear Members of the House Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee:

Housing has long been a top concern of NAMI Minnesota members. A lack of safe and affordable housing is one of the most powerful barriers to recovery. When this basic need isn't met, people cycle in and out of homelessness, jails, shelters, and hospitals. That's especially evident in Minnesota, where we are in the midst of an unprecedented housing crisis.

NAMI Minnesota supports the tenants' rights omnibus bill, HF3591. Ensuring Minnesotans have full legal protections applying for and staying in their homes is one of the best ways to prevent homelessness and provide the stability and security Minnesotans with mental illnesses need for their recovery.

In particular, we urge you to support Article 1, Sections 5-6, protecting tenants' right to call for emergency assistance in response to a mental health crisis. NAMI Minnesota has received several calls about families who were evicted from their homes for calling 911. Then, through a report from the Department of Justice, we learned the City of Anoka shared information about the mental illnesses and medications of tenants who had called 911 during a mental health emergency with their landlords and pressured those landlords to evict their tenants under threat of losing their rental license. No one - ever - should be afraid to call for help during a crisis because they might lose their housing.

Other policies in the bill we especially support include Article 5, Section 13, requiring landlords to make an effort to fill a unit a tenant vacates during the lease term. This would be helpful to people who experience mental health crises that require inpatient care. The last thing a person in crisis needs to worry about is rent for a home they are no longer able to live in.

We also support Article 5, Sections 34-36, establishing penalties for landlords who ban pets from subsidized and accessible housing units. A trained and certified psychiatric service dog costs between \$20,000 and \$30,000, a prohibitive price for most, especially those in subsidized housing. Many people with mental illnesses instead keep emotional support animals, which are often legally classified as "pets." They are necessary for the recovery and wellbeing of many people with mental illnesses and should be protected as such.

Thank you, Representatives Agbaje, Hussein, and Gomez for carrying this important bill. Thank you, Judiciary Committee for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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