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November 3, 2021

Amy Brendmoen, Council President  
 Saint Paul City Council  
 15 West Kellogg Blvd  
 Saint Paul, MN 55102

*Via Electronic Delivery*

**Re: Ord 21-33 (Homeless Services Facilities Zoning)**

Council President Brendmoen and Members of the Saint Paul City Council:

On behalf of Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, I write to thank you for your work on the Homeless Services Zoning Study and to express our support for the proposed zoning code amendments, as passed by the Saint Paul Planning Commission, which establish homeless services facilities as a permitted use.

Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis is a housing, emergency shelter and direct services provider serving more than 23,000 men, women, children and families annually. Many of these individuals seek emergency shelter, housing and supportive services at our Dorothy Day Place campus, which opened in Saint Paul's Ward 2 in the fall of 2019, just a few months before COVID-19.

Homelessness and its challenges are unfortunately increasing as we approach another winter of the pandemic. The proposed zoning changes will allow more organizations to offer much-needed services for individuals facing extreme hardships, and we are grateful for and encouraged by the opportunities they will provide.

The Saint Paul Planning Commission engaged extensively with City staff and the public to pass its final version of zoning amendments to allow for homeless services facilities anywhere in Saint Paul. Such flexibility is necessary to ensure people in need have adequate access to low-barrier and equitable services, wherever they may be.

As the Council takes up the zoning proposal for final adoption and debates additional amendments, we ask you to be mindful of perceived responsibilities and unintended challenges they may create for individuals and facilities. (Trash and litter, for example, are shared public concerns and nearly impossible to label as the unique problems and responsibilities of one private entity versus another.)

Requirements and restrictions placed on homeless services facilities must be in line with similar entities in zoning code in order to not discriminate against those facilities, the services being provided, and the individuals being served. We believe the zoning amendments as approved by the Planning Commission are best suited for these needs and set the stage for additional partnerships that advance our shared goals.

*Catholic Charities serves those most in need. We are a leader at solving poverty, creating opportunity, and advocating for justice in the community.*

Thank you again for your work on this important issue. The opportunities offered by these changes are and will be needed more than ever as our community continues to respond to the pandemic and homelessness crisis. We appreciate your support and look forward to the Council's final adoption of the Planning Commission's recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lorna Schmidt". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lorna Schmidt  
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