



North Dakota House of Representatives

STATE CAPITOL
600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Josh Boschee

District 44
517 First Street North
Fargo, ND 58102-4540
jboschee@ndlegis.gov

Minority Leader

COMMITTEES:
Industry, Business and Labor

March 14, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Larsen and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee,

For the record, my name is Josh Boschee and I serve as a Representative from District 44, which comprises downtown and north Fargo.

HCR 3030 was introduced to expand the conversation around homelessness, barriers to housing and assistance for renters throughout North Dakota. The House Appropriations Committee Human Resources Division had a great conversation last month as they dug into the work that the ND Housing Finance Agency was doing to manage the Federal grants and supplemental state dollars related to homelessness. Watching our colleagues engage the Agency with curiosity, especially as it related to homeless children, encouraged me to see what more we as the legislature can do to address this issue.

Like many aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state received significant financial resources from the Federal government to assist with addressing housing, whether that was to make sure those that are unhoused had access to housing or those that were renting or owned homes could remain housed. As those funds and programs phase out over the coming years, I believe this provides us an opportunity to review what works and doesn't work so that we can adjust to implement solutions that work for North Dakota.

When I served on the Fargo Moorhead Coalition for Homeless Persons Board of Directors (now called the FM Coalition to End Homelessness) it always amazed me how large the group was that met monthly to identify issues, implement solutions and coordinate support of our area's homeless population. Once a month, over 50 people would gather in the basement of the library, meaning there were hundreds of others back at shelters and offices still doing the work. While this coalition was working to meet the everyday crises our neighbors and family faced, they were also working to try and address the issues that cause homelessness.

At the state level, the ND Housing Finance Agency, Department of Commerce and Department of Health and Human Services all play an integral role in addressing homelessness and housing providing resources to individuals and community providers. In 2004, Governor Hoeven created through Executive Order the ND Interagency Council on Homelessness composed of state agencies, three mayors, the president of the ND Coalition for Homeless People and a representative from the Governor's office to evaluate resources, educate and provide recommendations to address homelessness throughout the state. You can review their [2021 report here](#). The work of these entities in collaboration with community providers and local governments may be moving the needle on

homelessness and housing, but I believe we as the legislature can provide greater direction and support to their work.

Other states, local governments and the US Department of Veterans Affairs have implemented Housing First strategies (get people housed first so they can work on the other issues impacting their life such as addiction, health and unemployment) and set goals to be at Functional Zero (having temporary and permanent housing available so that anyone that homelessness is rare and brief) as ways to actively address homelessness and housing affordability. Are these strategies North Dakota should explore? What can we learn from those that have worked towards and achieved these goals?

Over the past several bienniums, the legislature in partnership with state and local agencies has done a great job of implementing a whole of government approach at addressing addiction and behavioral health. It is my hope that we can implement a similar approach to housing. HCR 3030 will allow us as legislators to partner with state and Federal agencies, local governments, community providers and those that have experienced housing issues to evaluate what we do well, what we can improve on and what is missing from local or state policy.

Following me will be a couple stakeholders speaking to how a legislative study may be helpful to their work and as you can see there is testimony provided in LAWS and online.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I ask for you to provide a Do Pass recommendation on HCR 3030 so that we as the policy making and appropriations body have a better understanding of what is being done to address homelessness and housing, so that we be more engaged in implementing solutions that are cost effective and help support a healthier, more prosperous state for all our citizens. Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.