

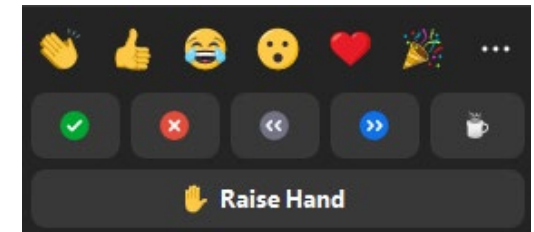
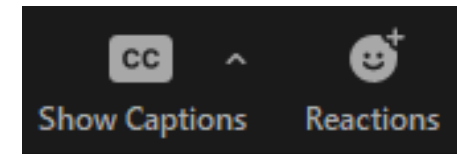
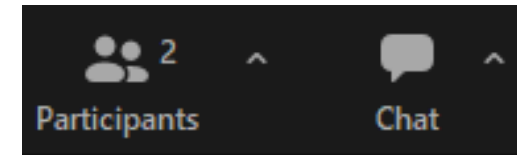
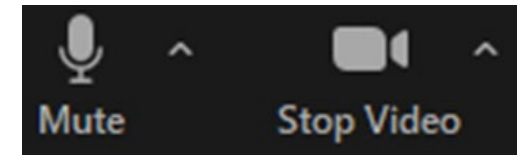
# Welcome to the Workgroup on Expediting Rental Assistance!

Please use this time to get settled and test out Zoom features.

- **Mute/Unmute:** Turn your microphone on/off. Use the arrow to adjust settings.
- **Stop/Start Video:** Turn your camera on/off. Use the arrow to adjust settings.
- **Participants:** See who's currently in the meeting.
- **Chat:** Open the chat panel.
- **Show Captions:** Turn on live captions (it only turns on for you, not everyone).
- **Reactions:** Use the Raise Hand feature to show you'd like to talk.

Please ensure Zoom shows your preferred name, and (if you like) add your pronouns.

- Click the “Participants” button.
- Hover your mouse over your name, then click the three dots beside it.
- Click “Rename.” A pop-up box will appear – edit your name and your pronouns.
- Click “Change.”



# Workgroup business

1. Workgroup updates
2. Legislative language overview and questions
3. Workgroup discussion on Legislative language
4. Legislative language with agency technical edits and voting
5. Agency comments and questions (for future attention)
6. Wrap-up

## Meeting materials sent:

- Agenda
- PowerPoint
- Draft legislative language
- Map of recommendations and draft legislative sections
- Updated side-by-side matrix
- Meeting summary from January meeting - any changes to the January meeting summary?

## Today we welcome:

- Erik Anderson, MMB Director of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs
- Legislative staff from DHS - Kristy Graume and Nicolas Demm and MHFA - Dan Kitzberger and Amanda Welliver
- Laura Paynter, Legislative Analyst, Senate Counsel Research and Fiscal Analysis and Justin Cope, Legislative Analyst, House Research Department
- Josh Ney as proxy for Lori Schultz from Community Action Partnership

# Workgroup timeline and milestones

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<b>Month</b>	<b>WERA work and milestones</b>
<b>September</b>	Build common knowledge and analyze issues
<b>October</b>	Brainstorm options; refine options at subgroups
<b>November</b>	Select options to turn into recommendations Write draft recommendations
<b>December</b>	Review draft recommendations
<b>January</b>	Finalize and vote on recommendations
<b>February</b>	Finalize and vote on draft legislative language Discuss final report Wrap up and celebration

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- Research in Action organized a second Community Convene session on January 18. Senator Port and Ellen Sahli represented the Workgroup at the first part of the gathering.
- Ops Team members suggested reaching back out to the people and organizations that WERA members consulted with during the workgroup process and sharing the final report following submittal to the legislature.
  - Proposed approach: In March, members will send the report link via email to the people and/or organizations with whom they had external consultation conversations.

- Comments were due from workgroup members in document by February 7
- **Workgroup discussion about report at February 8 WERA meeting**
- MAD incorporates comments and copy editor re-reviews
- MAD makes report document accessible
- MAD submits final report to legislative leaders by February 29



# Update on Workgroup Report Review by Members

- What stood out
- Any themes
- Any issues to discuss or resolve

# Legislative Language Overview

# Legislative language process update

- **January 16-February 2: Legislative Drafting Work**
  - Phase 1: Nonpartisan research staff led primary drafting of language with support from agency staff.
  - Phase 2: Reviews by agency staff-for accuracy.
- **February 2: draft language sent to workgroup for review**
- **February 8 WERA meeting:**
  - Overview of legislative language and group discussion
  - Presentation on legislative language with agency technical edits and discussion
  - Vote on final draft legislative language

## **Legislative language overview**

- Draft legislation has 11 sections
- Of the 12 recommendations, all map to legislative language except: “Review of related statutes”
  - Drafters did not see a way to draft and do not believe this language is necessary

## **Legislative language presentation order**

- Introduction from legislators
- Non-partisan staff will present legislative language
  - Questions from workgroup on drafting decisions
- Then, broader legislative language workgroup discussion
- After break, presentation on language with agency technical edits and voting

# Setting the stage – comments from legislators

# Review of Draft Legislative Language by Legislative Non-partisan Staff

## Section 1. [462A.2096] Annual Projection of Emergency Rental Assistance Needs

The agency must develop a projection of emergency rental assistance needs in consultation with the commissioner of human services and representatives from county and Tribal housing administrators and housing nonprofit agencies. The projection must identify the amount of funding required to meet all rental assistance needs, including the family homelessness prevention and assistance program, the emergency assistance program, and emergency general assistance. By January 15 each year, the commissioner must submit a report on the projected need for rental assistance to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over housing and human services finance and policy.

## Section 2. [462A.2098] Providing Information on Rental Housing

The agency shall regularly provide information to rental assistance program providers and to rental property owners that connect renters to state and federal programs that help renters stay stably housed. The agency shall leverage existing programs and resources in providing information under this section.



## Section 3. Data Collection to Measure Timeliness of Rental Assistance

The commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, working with the commissioner of human services and county housing administrators, must develop criteria for measuring the timeliness of processing rental assistance applications, and collect data to monitor application processing speeds. Programs to be monitored include family homelessness prevention and assistance, emergency assistance, and emergency general assistance. The commissioners of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and human services must use the data collected to inform improvements to rental assistance application processing systems. By January 15, 2027, the commissioner must submit a report to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over housing and human services finance and policy. The report must include analysis of the data collected and whether goals have been met to (1) process a rental assistance application within two weeks of receipt of a complete application, and (2) make payment to a landlord within 30 days of receipt of a complete rental assistance application.

## Section 4. Direction to Commissioners of Human Services; MAXIS Modifications

The commissioner of human services must make modifications to the MAXIS system to ensure it has greater flexibility in issuing assistance payments while maintaining controls to monitor and prevent inaccurate, unnecessary, or fraudulent payments. The commissioner must identify gaps and plan modifications as needed to fulfill the stated goals in this bill.

## Section 5. Direction to Commissioners of Human Services and Housing; Emergency Assistance Program Modifications

The commissioners of human services and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency must develop program recommendations for emergency assistance that have the flexibility to provide relief for crises within a time frame that corresponds to the emergency and that are simple enough for applicants to understand across all emergency assistance programs. In the development of these recommendations, the commissioners must:

- (1) recognize differences between administrative and legislative authority and propose legislative changes to the definition of emergency general assistance;

## Section 5. Direction to Commissioners of Human Services and Housing; Emergency Assistance Program Modifications - continued

- (2) adopt policies and practices that prioritize easy-to-understand eligibility criteria and definitions that prioritize accessible, humanizing approaches when assisting persons through a crisis; and
- (3) develop guidance to emergency assistance program administrators that encourage the program administrators to be flexible with the required forms of documentation for the program and to avoid establishing documentation requirements that are likely to be barriers to participation in emergency assistance for eligible households.

## Section 6. Direction to Commissioners of Human Services and Housing; Expand Outreach and Consolidate Program Information

- (a) The commissioners of human services and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, in consultation with counties and nonprofit community partners, must develop and implement strategies that expand outreach to community members to increase awareness of emergency rental assistance availability and how persons can apply for assistance.
  
- (b) The commissioners of human services and the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency must create a resource that consolidates program requirements for emergency assistance, emergency general assistance, and family homeless prevention assistance in one location that potential applicants can utilize to ensure they are able to apply for assistance as early as possible. The commissioners must develop a process to ensure updates are made to the resource created under this section as program changes are implemented.

## Section 7. Electronic Signatures for Rental Assistance

The commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the commissioner of human services shall develop uniform e-signature options to be used in applications for emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance program assistance. No later than June 30, 2026, the commissioners shall require administrators of the emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance program to incorporate and implement the developed e-signature options.

## Section 8. Language Access in Applications for Rental Assistance

The commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the commissioner of human services shall research state and federal laws and regulations to determine language access standards applying to the organizations' emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance programs and shall ensure compliance with all applicable language access requirements. The commissioners shall identify specific languages into which program materials could be translated to improve access to emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance program assistance and shall translate the materials into the identified languages. The commissioners shall develop and implement a plan to translate any website applications for emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance program assistance into multilingual website applications. The commissioners shall identify funding needs to improve their organizations' language access and any available funding sources. The commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency shall provide technical assistance and support to family homeless prevention and assistance program grantees to ensure grantees meet language access standards.

## Section 9. Promoting Adequate Funding for Processing Emergency Assistance Applications; Direction to the Commissioner

- a) The commissioner of human services, in consultation with county and Tribal human services agencies, the Minnesota Association of County Social Services Administrators, the Minnesota Tribal Collaborative, and other stakeholders, shall identify and evaluate strategies to promote adequate funding for processing emergency rental assistance applications. The commissioner shall:
- (1) evaluate state and federal reimbursement for administrative support staff;
  - (2) determine adequate compensation for processors based on objective data such as market studies or livable wage markers;



## Section 9. Promoting Adequate Funding for Processing Emergency Assistance Applications; Direction to Commissioner – continued

- (3) determine if state funding increases are necessary to process emergency rental assistance applications in a timely manner; and
  - (4) establish a process to determine an equitable funding formula that is adjustable as needed.
- (b) The commissioner shall report the results of the evaluation of funding for processing emergency assistance applications and any related recommendations to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over emergency assistance by January 1, 2026. The report must also include any draft legislation necessary to implement the recommendations.

## Section 10. Recommendations for a Centralized Rental Assistance Application System

Subdivision 1. Development of new rental assistance application system. The commissioner of human services, in collaboration with the commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the commissioner of information technology services, must develop a recommendation for a new centralized rental assistance application system that will be administered by the state and be available statewide to all rental assistance providers to process rental assistance applications. The commissioner shall consult with various rental assistance providers throughout the state in making recommendations under this section.

## Section 10. Recommendations for a Centralized Rental Assistance Application System-continued

Subd. 2. New system requirements. The rental assistance application system must have the following requirements:

- (1) is a centralized system operated by the Department of Human Services;
- (2) is able to integrate with existing rental assistance application systems;
- (3) serves as a single application portal into multiple state rental assistance programs;
- (4) is flexible, scalable, and customizable;
- (5) serves as a single source for agencies to view applications and supporting documentation; and
- (6) allows applicants to view their documentation and the status of their application.

## Section 10. Recommendations for a Centralized Rental Assistance Application System-continued

Subd. 3. Cost estimate. The commissioner of human services shall consult with other individuals that have expertise in statewide data systems and shall put together a cost estimate for the rental assistance application system.

Subd. 4. Report to the legislature. The commissioner of human services shall submit a report by January 15, 2027, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over housing and human services finance and policy. The report shall include proposed timelines, a sample request for a proposal with technical specifications, and cost estimates for a new rental assistance application system under this section. The report must also include any draft legislation necessary to implement the application system.

## Section 11. Verification Procedures for Rental Assistance

- (a) The commissioner of the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and the commissioner of human services shall consult with local officials to develop recommendations aimed at simplifying the process of verifying the information in applications for emergency general assistance, general assistance, and family homeless prevention and assistance program assistance. In developing recommendations, the commissioners must consider:
  - (1) allowing self-attestation of emergencies, assets, and income;
  - (2) allowing verbal authorization by applicants to allow rental assistance administrators to communicate with landlords and utility providers regarding applications for assistance; and
  - (3) Allowing landlords to apply for rental assistance on tenants' behalf.

## Section 11. Verification Procedures for Rental Assistance – continued

(b) The commissioners must:

- (1) prepare recommendations by January 1, 2025;
- (2) adopt any recommendations by July 1, 2025; and
- (3) provide technical assistance to counties, Tribes, and other rental assistance administrators to implement these recommendations.

- Are there any question on drafting decisions with the legislative language?

# Legislative language workgroup discussion

1. What stands out for you with the legislative language?
2. What is your response or reaction to the legislative language? Any highlights or concerns?
3. What does this draft legislative language mean for the workgroup? What are the implications and considerations?
4. What issues (if any) do we need to resolve to accomplish our work?



Break

# Overview of legislative language with agency technical edits and voting

# Introduction from legislators - Legislative language with agency technical edits and voting

# Background/set-up for legislative language with agency technical edits

- DHS and MHFA submitted edits that fall into the categories of technical edits and future attention edits
- Technical edits are – suggested word change (e.g., adding a clarifying adjective) or a technical correction (e.g., ensuring the correct agency is identified)
- Agency questions and comments for future attention – more substantial content questions or comments without clear specific substitute language or proposed change.
  - Agency questions and comments for future attention will be documented in the report and meeting summary.

Today, workgroup members will consider incorporating technical edits in draft legislative language and voting on the language.

## Decision Threshold

- The workgroup strives for consensus with decision making whenever possible, but a majority (62.5% of membership) will count if workgroup members cannot reach consensus. If 62.5% of the members present are in favor of an action (10 of the 16 workgroup members), then the workgroup will advance that action.

## Process for Legislative Language Review and Decision Making

- Workgroup members will vote yes/no on passing legislative language using the following statement:

“Sections \_ and \_ with any noted technical edits should be included in the legislative language submitted to the legislature in the WERA final report.”

## Section 1. [462A.2096] Annual Projection of Emergency Rental Assistance Needs

~~The agency~~ Minnesota Housing must develop a projection of emergency rental assistance needs in consultation with the commissioner of human services and representatives from county and Tribal housing administrators and housing nonprofit agencies. The projection must identify the amount of funding required to meet all rental assistance needs, including the family homelessness prevention and assistance program, the emergency assistance program, and emergency general assistance. By January 15 each year, the commissioner must submit a report on the projected need for rental assistance to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees having jurisdiction over housing and human services finance and policy.

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~~The agency~~ Minnesota Housing shall regularly provide information to rental assistance program providers and to rental property owners that connect renters to state and federal programs that help renters stay stably housed. The agency shall leverage existing programs and resources in providing information under this section.

# Voting on Sections 1 and 2



## Section 3. Data Collection to Measure Timeliness of Rental Assistance

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The commissioner of human services must make modifications to the MAXIS system to ensure it has greater flexibility in issuing assistance payments while maintaining controls to monitor and prevent inaccurate, unnecessary, or fraudulent payments. The commissioner must identify gaps and plan modifications as needed to fulfill the stated goals in this bill.

# Voting on Sections 3 and 4

## Section 5. Direction to Commissioners of Human Services and Housing; Emergency Assistance Program Modifications

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# Voting on Sections 5 and 6

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# Voting on Sections 7 and 8

## Section 9. Promoting Adequate Funding for Processing Emergency Assistance Applications; Direction to Commissioner – continued

- (3) determine if state funding increases are necessary to process emergency rental assistance applications in a timely manner; and
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# Voting on Section 9

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## Section 11. Verification Procedures for Rental Assistance – continued

(b) The commissioners must:

- (1) prepare recommendations by January 1, 2025;
- (2) adopt any recommendations by July 1, 2025; and
- (3) provide technical assistance to counties, Tribes, and other rental assistance administrators to implement these recommendations.

# Voting on Sections 10 and 11

# Agency comments and questions for future attention

## **Background**

- Agency comments and questions for future attention --more substantial content questions or comments without clear specific substitute language or proposed change
- Content that will be included in the final report for reference as workgroup concludes and legislative process begins.

## **For today's meeting**

- For workgroup members: are there any questions or reactions that you have to specific comments or questions?
- For agency representatives: do you have any remarks about your comments?

# Wrap-up and next steps

- MAD will email the meeting summary to members and post it on the website.
- Other next steps

(If time allows)

- Give input in a Plus (positives)/delta (change) grid to capture feedback on what worked well about the workgroup process and what you would change.
- Give input in another area on things you have appreciated about members and the workgroup.

# Thank you!

**Contact us:**

[Karen.Gaides@state.mn.us](mailto:Karen.Gaides@state.mn.us)

[Katie.Hatt@state.mn.us](mailto:Katie.Hatt@state.mn.us)

**Workgroup website:**

<https://mn.gov/mmb/mad/clients/expediting-rental-assistance/>