



Tenant hotline  
Eviction research  
Impact litigation  
Renter organizing

# HOME Line

**2018 Annual Report**



## Letter from the **Executive Director**

In 2018, HOME Line completed our 26th year of providing legal advice and advocacy for Minnesota renters. We advised more than 13,000 households on their rights, published several studies on evictions, participated in critical litigation impacting tenant protections statewide, and advocated alongside low-income tenants facing displacement and loss of affordable housing. We did this while also navigating exciting transitions with the retirement of our longtime Executive Director Beth Kodluboy and Senior Housing Attorney Paul Birnberg, both of whom provided years of invaluable leadership in public interest legal work and advocacy – and have our immense gratitude.

As 2019 unfolds, we're lucky to have several new staff members and volunteers helping to improve and expand our legal services to more communities while also supporting efforts to advance tenant-friendly public policy efforts. We now serve Hmong-speaking clients directly through our hotline, and we have expanded

our ability to connect with and advise renters facing court eviction filings throughout the metro area. I'm confident that 2019 will be yet another year we improve and increase access to justice for our clients.

HOME Line relies on our knowledgeable and experienced housing attorneys, tenant advocates, language-specific outreach staff, community organizers, and more than 50 volunteers and interns to accomplish meaningful results for tenants throughout the state. Please consider how you can contribute to this work. One-time or recurring opportunities for financial donations and volunteer options are available on our website at [homelinemn.org/donate](http://homelinemn.org/donate).

Sincerely

Eric Hauge, Executive Director

### 2019 HOME Line Staff

Eric Hauge  
Executive Director

Deb Riebel  
Office Manager

Mike Vraa  
Managing Attorney &  
Hotline Director

Matt Eichenlaub  
Housing Attorney

Samuel Spaid  
Housing Attorney &  
Research Director

Pattye Hechter  
Housing Attorney

Zeynab Egale  
Tenant Advocate

Shelby Simmons  
Volunteer Coordinator/  
Tenant Advocate

Eden Fere  
Tenant Advocate

Stephen Rathke  
Housing Attorney

Erik Vogel  
Tenant Advocate

Ivory Taylor  
Lead Tenant Organizer and  
VISTA Program Director

Samantha Vang  
Tenant Advocate

Andrea Palumbo  
Housing Attorney

Michael Dahl  
Public Policy Director

Danielle Slotness  
Eviction Project  
Coordinator



# TENANT HOTLINE

**HOME Line's primary program**, a statewide tenant hotline, provides renters with free, confidential, and convenient legal information about their tenant rights. The hotline began advising renters in 1992, expanding to cover the entire state in 2014.



In 2018, **13,240 Minnesota renter households** across the state, or **33,100 total residents**, contacted our Tenant Hotline. This represented a **5% increase** over the number of calls in 2017.



HOME Line helped these households **recover or save an estimated \$1.6 million**



In 6 percent of calls, we reviewed **765 documents**, including leases or photos, requiring a deeper level of analysis



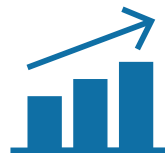
HOME Line helped **prevent an estimated 988 evictions**



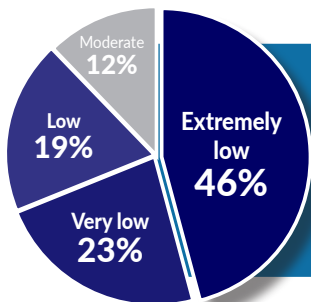
We had **4,114 follow-up conversations** with clients whose issues were too complex to be resolved in one contact



Renters with repair issues who follow our advice are **37% more likely to get their problems fixed**



Compared to 2017, calls related to **notice-to-vacate/non-renewal of lease, heat, retaliation and privacy** increased in 2018



**The vast majority (88%) of callers are low-income.** Nearly half (46%) are extremely low income, based on HUD income categories

## Top 10 Reasons for Calls

1. Repairs	2,836
2. Security Deposit	1,570
3. Eviction	1,535
4. Notice to Vacate	1,170
5. Break Lease	978
6. Lease Questions	722
7. Privacy / Intrusion	700
8. Neighbors	427
9. Rent Increase	337
10. Bed bugs	309



**70%** of callers in 2018 were **female**, while 30% were male



**The race of the majority of callers** was white (62%), with 26% Black, 6% Hispanic and 2% Asian, Native and other respectively



# VOLUNTEERS



In 2018, HOME Line had **54 volunteers** and interns who took **1,427 calls** from tenants and volunteered **2,090 hours**



Volunteers also did extensive legal research on **35 different housing law topics** in 50 states to help our policy efforts in the 2019 legislative session



Volunteers worked to **update our website** with local heat ordinances of more than 120 cities in Minnesota



Hamline University student, Alisha Bowen, conducted a survey to **obtain and analyze feedback** on HOME Line's services from former and current clients



Rebecca Hare, an intern from the Center for Urban & Regional Affairs, researched and produced reports on **evictions in the cities of Brooklyn Park and St. Paul**

## VOLUNTEER PROFILE: Aurora Payne



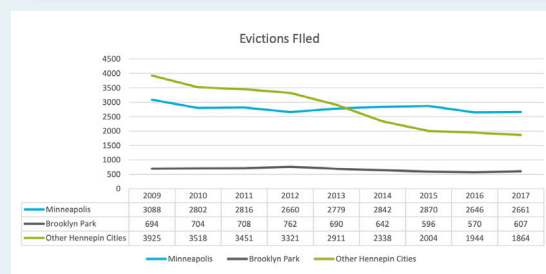
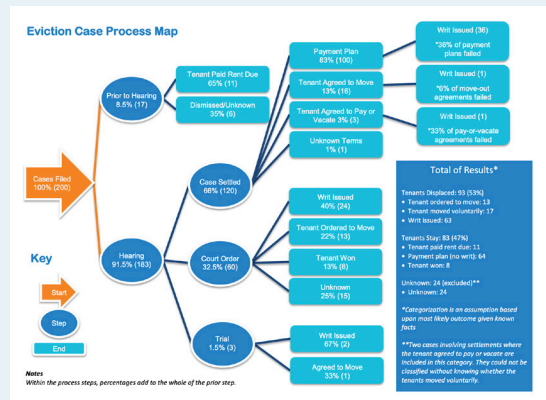
"As a volunteer, I love having long-time clients I'm able to get to know better. I'm still working with and answering questions for a client from the first week of my internship. Working on the hotline allows me to make a very stressed client's day better just by telling them their rights under the law. I like being helpful to them. In my internship, I enjoyed doing legal research because it helped me to see different states' laws on landlord/tenant issues. I've really enjoyed going in depth with landlord/tenant law and I loved this internship a lot more than I imagined."



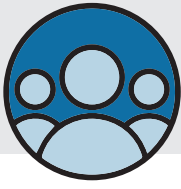
# RESEARCH

In 2018, HOME Line researched and produced **three comprehensive eviction reports for Greater Minnesota, Brooklyn Park, and St. Paul**. These studies involved detailed case file reviews, eviction/court process mapping, geographic analysis of filings, identification of frequent filers, and other important evaluations.

While each study offered insights into the specific process and outcomes of evictions in each geographic region the research helped to better inform the public and policy makers about the impact of evictions on the broader community. Each report included **recommendations for public and private responses** to improve the eviction process, while working to decrease and divert cases away from formal eviction filings.







# TENANT ORGANIZING

## Lou Park and Mears Park Apartments

In St. Louis Park and St. Paul, tenants from Lou Park and Mears Park Place Apartments **faced the non-renewal of their Project-Based Section 8 contracts** with Bigos Management, which would result in the loss of 82 long-term deeply affordable units. These residents primarily represent folks from immigrant, elderly, disabled, low-income and single-parent family backgrounds.

Ivory Taylor and Asha Ahmed, former HOME Line VISTAs, worked with tenants to **establish tenant associations**. Tenants then reached out to Bigos Management to advocate for the renewal of their Project-Based Section 8 contracts. After Bigos Management's attorneys reiterated the decision to end the contract, residents organized an **action around Sukkot**, a Jewish holiday observed by building a temporary shelter in your backyard. Tenants and neighbors at Lou Park found meaning in the symbol of a temporary shelter — due to the uncertainty surrounding the future of their housing. Jewish Community Action, HOME Line, and the St. Louis Park Community Housing Team helped the tenants organize and turn out participants to the event.

Numerous state and local elected officials attended, including **Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan**, who described growing up in Section 8 housing across the street. Tenants from both properties shared their stories and Rabbi Michael Latz performed a blessing. Tenants shared that the event made them hopeful — and several elected officials took further action. As of mid-2019, tenants are still seeking stability in their affordable homes.

## Madison Apartments and Townhomes

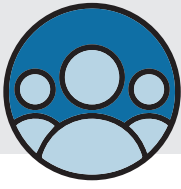
With the help of HOME Line VISTAs and support from Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc., **Madison Apartments and Townhomes tenants created a tenant association** to respond to a plan by the owners to renovate the townhomes and address maintenance issues in the apartment building. The plan would have **displaced 22 households** from the community until the renovations were completed, disrupting school placements for children, as well as family and community caregiving among tenants. In organizing, the tenants brought the owners to **restructure the redevelopment plans** so they would not be displaced, and vital repairs would be made to the historical apartment building.



Tenant leaders and staff from HOME Line and Elliot Park Neighborhood celebrate the tenant association's success in holding their landlord accountable in the redevelopment process.



Sukkot event from left: Lou Park residents outside their apartment, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, Lou Park tenant Emma Shapiro and Rabbi Michael Latz.



# TENANT ORGANIZING

## Normandale Lake Estates

In April 2018, residents of Normandale Lake Estates (NLE) in Bloomington learned that their affordable market-rate apartment complex had been purchased by a new, out-of-state landlord. Days later, many residents received one-month notices to vacate, and their neighbors feared they would be the next to receive a notice. In response, residents organized and partnered with a broad coalition of Bloomington community members and advocates to host resident meetings and demand alternatives to the landlord's plans. This organizing resulted in negotiated agreements that offered residents additional time. While ultimately unsuccessful in preserving this affordable complex, the residents advocacy sparked urgency for action throughout the metro and in the city of Bloomington. The Bloomington City Council subsequently passed a tenant protection ordinance aimed to assist renters facing displacement and a "Opportunity Housing Ordinance" requiring developers to set aside units as affordable during new construction or rehab.



Top: Residents at Normandale Lake Estates share their experiences in a brief video available online at [cutt.ly/NLE](http://cutt.ly/NLE). Bottom: Advocates and residents rally outside the management company's office.



# IMPACT LITIGATION

HOME Line represented and obtained an unpublished decision in favor of the tenant in an eviction appeal before the Minnesota Court of Appeals. The lower court found that when the landlord failed to get a rental license the landlord could evict the tenant for unlawful occupancy. The Court of Appeals reversed and decided, among other things, that a tenant is not unlawfully occupying their rental merely because the landlord failed to get a rental license and the tenant is still entitled to a valid notice to vacate.

HOME Line also represented a tenant in an eviction appeal before the Minnesota Supreme Court. The Minnesota Court of Appeals, in a surprising decision, said that the tenants are not protected from many types of retaliation unless they had filed a court case against their landlord. HOME Line argued that tenants should be protected from all forms of retaliation even if they did not file a court case. Oral arguments were held in October with a decision expected in mid 2019.

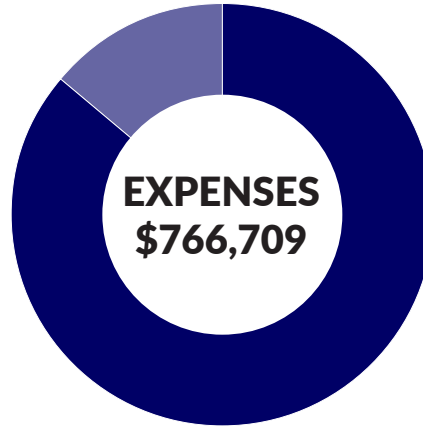
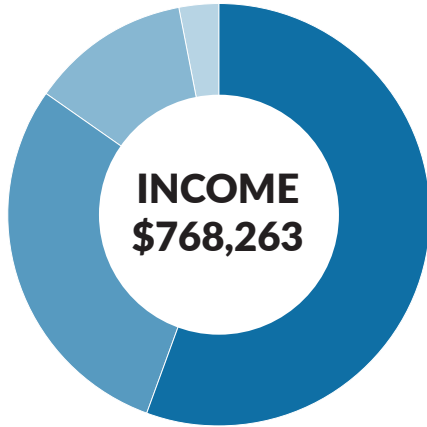


HOME Line attorney Samuel Spaid makes oral arguments in *Central Housing Associates, LP, v. Olson* at the Minnesota Supreme Court.

HOME Line participated as an Amicus in *Ellis v. John Doe*, and the Minnesota Supreme Court issued a ruling in March 2019 in favor of the tenant upholding and protecting a tenant's right to withhold rent in response to unmade repairs.



# FINANCIALS



Government Grants	\$426,893
Foundation Grants	\$225,520
Other Earned Income	\$93,996
Contributions	\$21,854

Tenant Hotline	\$660,903
Organizing & Policy	\$105,806

<b>2018 Total Assets</b>	<b>\$767,087</b>
<b>2018 Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$67,600</b>
<b>2018 Net Assets</b>	<b>\$699,487</b>

## 2018 HOME Line Board of Directors

**Madina Ameerally**  
**Board President**  
Attorney, Owner  
*Ameerally Law Office*

**Julie Martinez**  
**Board Treasurer**  
Cooperative Housing Specialist  
*Northcounty Cooperative Foundation*

**Carolyn Szczepanski**  
**Board Secretary**  
Communications & Programming Coordinator  
*The Alliance*

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*Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota*

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**Margaret Kaplan**  
President  
*Housing Justice Center*

**Maria Johnson**  
Human Service Representative at  
*Hennepin County* and  
Class Representative in  
*Soderstrom et al v. MSP Crossroads Apartments*

## 2018-2019 FUNDERS

McKnight Foundation	Heading Home MN Funders Collaborative	City of Eden Prairie
Pohlad Family Foundation	Hugh J. Andersen Foundation	City of Minneapolis
Otto Bremer Foundation	Fourth Generation Fund	City of Minnetonka
Bush Foundation	Minnesota State Bar Foundation	City of Plymouth CDBG*
Faegre Baker Daniels	Ramsey County Bar Foundation	City of St. Paul
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund	Hennepin County Bar Foundation	Hennepin County
F. R Bigelow Foundation	City of Bloomington Human Services	Consolidated Pool Cities CDBG*
St. Paul Foundation		Ramsey County CDBG*
Minnesota Housing		Corporation for National and Community Service (Americorps VISTA)

\* Community Development Block Grant





**Speak to a Tenant Advocate:**

**Metro: 612-728-5767**

**Toll-Free in Greater MN: 1-866-866-3546**

**E-mail a Housing Attorney:**

**[homelinemn.org/email](mailto:homelinemn.org/email)**

**HOME Line ofrece servicios en español.**

**Para Español, llame al 612-255-8870**

**HOME Line waxay bixisaa adeeg ku baxa Afka-Soomaaliga.**

**Af- Soomaali wac 612-255-8860**

**Peb lub koom haum HOME Line muaj neeg txhais lus Hmoob.**

**Hais lus Hmoob, Hu 612-255-7104**

**Learn more about HOME Line at**

**[www.homelinemn.org](http://www.homelinemn.org)**