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.

Sincerely

Eric Hauge, Executive Director

2019 HOME Line Staff

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Executive Director
Deb Riebel
Office Manager
Mike Vraa
Managing Attorney & Hotline Director
Matt Eichenlaub
Housing Attorney
Samuel Spaid
Housing Attorney & Research Director
Pattye Hechter
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Zeynab Egale
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Shelby Simmons
Volunteer Coordinator/Tenant Advocate
Eden Fere
Tenant Advocate
Stephen Rathke
Housing Attorney
Erik Vegel
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
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. HOME Line helped prevent an estimated 988 evictions.

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

In 6 percent of calls, we reviewed 765 documents, including leases or photos, requiring a deeper level of analysis. We had 4,114 follow-up conversations with clients whose issues were too complex to be resolved in one contact.

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.

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

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

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
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**.

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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.
**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.
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.

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 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

INCOME
$768,263

EXPENSES
$766,709

Government Grants $426,893
Foundation Grants $225,520
Other Earned Income $93,996
Contributions $21,854
Tenant Hotline $660,903
Organizing & Policy $105,806

2018 Total Assets $767,087
2018 Total Liabilities $67,600
2018 Net Assets $699,487

2018-2019 FUNDERS
McKnight Foundation
Pohlad Family Foundation
Otto Bremer Foundation
Bush Foundation
Faegre Baker Daniels
Greater Minnesota Housing Fund
F. R Bigelow Foundation
St. Paul Foundation
Minnesota Housing
Heading Home MN Funders Collaborative
Hugh J. Andersen Foundation
Fourth Generation Fund
Minnesota State Bar Foundation
Ramsey County Bar Foundation
Hennepin County Bar Foundation
City of Bloomington Human Services
City of Eden Prairie
City of Minneapolis
City of Minnetonka
City of Plymouth CDBG*
City of St. Paul
Hennepin County Consolidated Pool
Cities CDBG*
Ramsey County CDBG*
Corporation for National and Community Service (Americorps VISTA)

* Community Development Block Grant

2018 HOME Line Board of Directors
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Attorney, Owner
Ameerally Law Office

Julie Martinez
Board Treasurer
Cooperative Housing Specialist
Northcounty Cooperative Foundation

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Community Action Partnership for Suburban Hennepin

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
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

HOME Line ofrece servicios en español.
Para Español, llame al 612-255-8870

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Learn more about HOME Line at
www.homelinemn.org