



COMMUNITY ADVOCATES
Where Meeting Basic Needs Inspires Hope

October 14, 2021

Dear Finance & Personnel Committee,

I submit this letter in support of proposal 34 (sponsored by Ald. Johnson), the Milwaukee Rental Housing Resource Center (RHRC).

Community Advocates exists with a mission of helping individuals and families meet their most basic needs. We serve over 70,000 clients each year that are experiencing challenges with their rental housing, energy assistance, domestic violence, substance use disorders, and mental health issues.

Housing stability and neighborhood stabilization has always been at the center of our work, but the need for services and resources has grown to unprecedented levels as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Since June of 2020, Community Advocates has administered over \$30 million in federal stimulus emergency rental assistance to 5000 households in the City of Milwaukee, ensuring individuals and families that have experienced financial hardship can remain in their homes because their rents are paid.

Community Advocates is proud to be a co-partner and host site for the physical space of the newly launched RHRC, a partnership that has been critical in our ability to provide aid and services at this level. The RHRC brings together a collaborative network of local housing and related assistance programs, providing a one stop shop for landlords and tenants with a menu of eviction diversion tools pre and post filing. MKE RHRC triage specialists, housed at Community Advocates, now field over 500 inquiries each week from those with urgent needs for eviction prevention services. Having the ability to provide a separate team to assess and triage is meeting a gap and connecting tenants and landlords to services in a way that has not been done before in our city. Support from the American Rescue Plan Act will provide *critical* operating funds over 4 years as we further build the Center and help us cultivate support from private philanthropy while demonstrating impact.

Housing stability is ultimately the best-case scenario for tenants, landlords and our communities. Support for the RHRC is an investment that can reshape rental housing in our city.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andi Elliott". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Andi Elliott
Chief Executive Officer
Community Advocates, Inc.