

Hennepin County 2023 State Legislative Priorities and Platform



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hennepin.us



Here together. For the better.

Hennepin County is Minnesota's most populated county with 1.3 million residents. That only tells part of the story.

Hennepin County includes: 45 municipalities that span from urban cities to rural communities; global destinations like the Mall of America; major transit hubs like the Minneapolis — St. Paul International Airport; and important innovation and research centers like the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

The county is also a center of commerce. Approximately one-third of the state's jobs come from businesses in Hennepin County, including 10 Fortune 500 Companies, such as Target, UnitedHealth Group, and Best Buy, and

agriculture giants such as Cargill. In addition, Minnesota's economy is driven by small business and entrepreneurs. More than 94% of businesses in Minnesota employ fewer than 50 employees, and the U.S. Census Bureau reports that Minnesota is home to more than 397,000 non-employer businesses — or the self-employed.

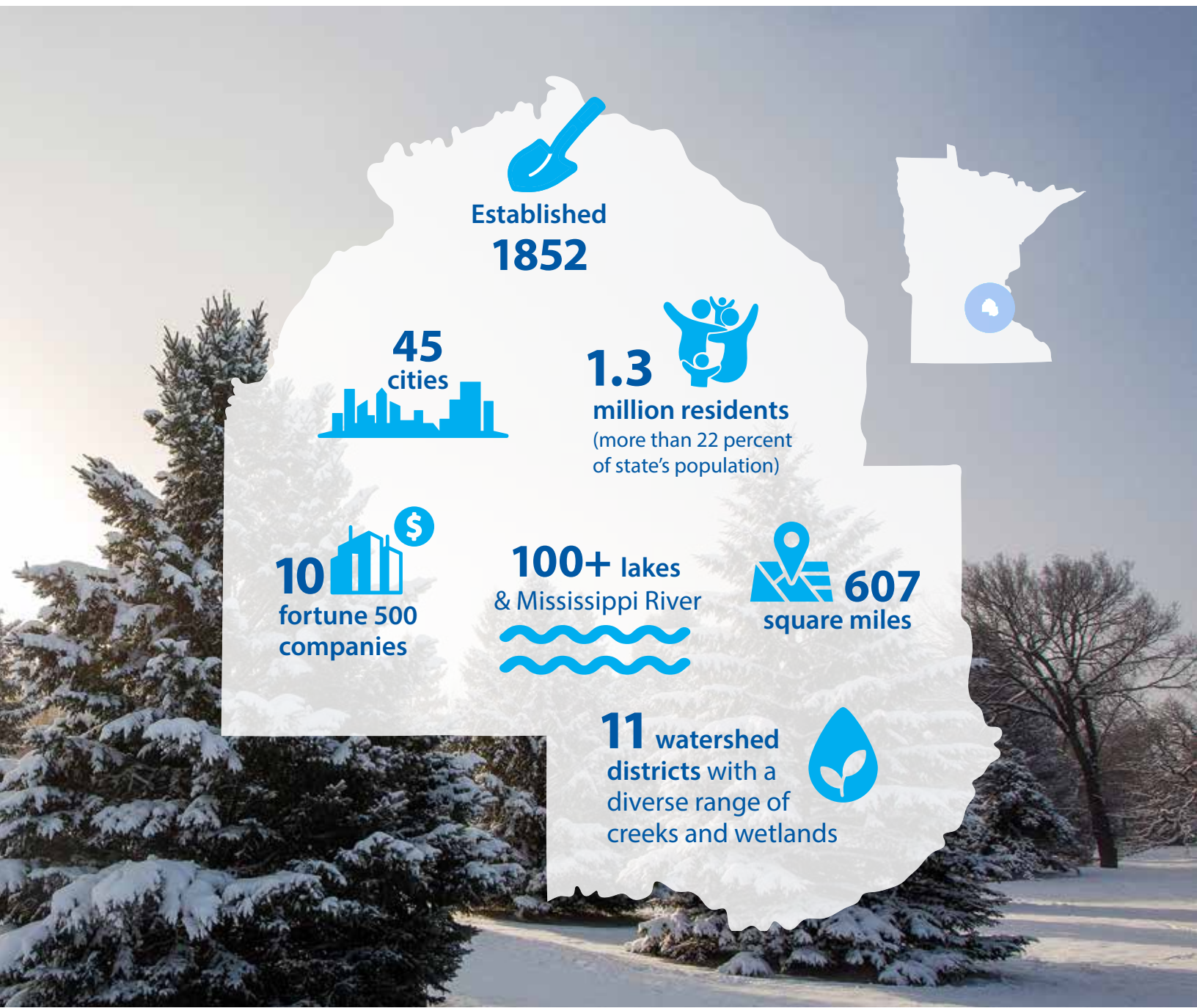
This wealth of small businesses has helped to uniquely enrich the Twin Cities metro area. Minneapolis – St. Paul ranks as the 7th most diverse economy among all 384 metropolitan areas in the United States.

Minnesota's robust and diverse economy is aligned with that of Hennepin County. Together, we all do better.

Hennepin County's 2023 State Legislative Priorities and Platform has numerous requests, with many that will benefit residents throughout the state. This includes requests that change systems to help build equity for all. Others are environmental asks that will affect the air quality for all Minnesotans. And there are others for improved transportation systems, which are critical for employment and moving goods and services.

This platform asks for the state to invest in vital infrastructure, such as affordable housing. It asks for investments in children and families, as well as in health and health care. It asks for continued investments in employment pathways, especially as we see such low unemployment rates and know that businesses are hungry for people who can do the work.


The requests included here are about investing in Hennepin County priorities for the benefit of our residents and all Minnesotans.



Established
1852




45
cities

1.3 
million residents
(more than 22 percent
of state's population)

10 
fortune 500
companies

100+ lakes
& Mississippi River


 **607**
square miles

11 watershed
districts with a
diverse range of
creeks and wetlands 

Priorities

Housing

Increase state resources to support safe and stable housing for all individuals and families.

Mental health

Support systems redesign to meet the needs of adults and children with mental illness, including expanded supportive housing options and services required for stabilizing individuals in the community.

Disparity reduction

Expand resources and strengthen partnerships to reverse persistent racial and economic disparities that drive poverty, poor health, involvement in the criminal justice system, transportation and internet and technology access, and low achievement.

Criminal justice reform

Promote adequate funding and incentives to address needs of an increasing and diverse offender population within the criminal justice system.

Child protection

Promote child well-being and achieve positive outcomes for county-involved youth by standardizing practice models, investing upstream in early interventions, and stabilizing the child protection system.

Platform

Bonding



Anaerobic Digester — Organics Processing Center — \$26 million

Hennepin County is seeking state bonding to build an anaerobic digestion (AD) facility adjacent to the county's Brooklyn Park Transfer Station.

The facility would support growing organics recycling programs and turn food scraps into clean energy. This critical infrastructure will help the county and region advance zero-waste and climate action goals.



Hennepin Avenue bridges — \$23.4 million

Hennepin County is seeking state funding to recondition the iconic Hennepin Avenue suspension bridge and two approach bridges.

This important link across the Mississippi River supports multi-modal transportation, including for transit users and more than 2,500 people walking and rolling, 1,300 people biking and 22,000 people driving across the bridge daily.

Environment and energy

Protect the environment and conserve resources



Protect the environment and conserve resources through responsible management of waste and natural resources and promotion of environmental stewardship

Environment and energy

Climate sustainability

- Support legislation and policies consistent with the county's Climate Action Plan to mitigate the impacts of climate change, build resilient communities and reduce disparities, protect and enhance natural environments, and promote sustainability in county operations.

Natural resources

- Support legislation and state funding to local governments for planning and response to the loss of trees due to emerald ash borer and other invasive pests and pathogens. Support state investment in community forest tree canopies to mitigate the effects of climate change and air pollution.
- Support 2023 funding recommendations for Outdoor Heritage Fund (Lessard-Sams Council) allocation for conservation easements and wildlife habitat protection and restoration.

Waste management

- Support increased state funding for SCORE, expanding organics composting and anaerobic digestion initiatives, and promoting market development for recycled materials.
- Support legislation to establish extended producer responsibility for packaging, paper products, and single-use products to support the transition to reusable packaging and improve recycling.
- Support the Partnership on Waste and Energy 2023 legislative platform.

General government

Improve government



Partner with the State of Minnesota to improve government services delivery, reduce mandates on local government, re-prioritize government spending and promote effective management of county programs by allowing local control.

General government

Elections

- Support improved efficiency of election administration through the use of e-poll books with electronic signature, automatic voter registration and improvements to absentee voting procedures and timelines.
- Expand absentee voter outreach opportunities.
- Support state-level standards and equipment for ranked choice voting.
- Prohibit intimidation of voters and election officials, and interference with election administration.
- Support efficient election administration by removing the statutory requirement for a witness when casting absentee ballots.

Operations and administration

- Clarify and modernize marriage license application and reporting statute language, make authority to accept remote marriage license applications permanent, and increase marriage license, motor vehicle, and driver's license filing fees to make deputy registrars' offices more self-sufficient.
- Make permanent the ability for people to remotely apply for marriage licenses.
- Standardize and clarify the process by which marriage license applicants with a felony conviction can change their names.
- Authorize the expansion of services at the North Minneapolis Service Center to include motor vehicle and DNR services.
- Support revenue sharing with the state's Driver and Vehicle Services for online transactions.
- Support efforts of others to obtain state funding for Public Land Survey System (PLSS) remonumentation and perpetuation.

- Increase bid limits for small business enterprise (SBE) contracts.
- Support changes in state law to eliminate the Municipal Building Commission.

Data practices

- Support efforts of others to amend statutory requirements and allow the Commissioner of Public Safety discretion in determining the penalty for accessing driver's license data without ill intent.
- Oppose changes to the Minnesota Data Practices Act that require audit logs or audit trails that impose an undue financial or resource management burden on local units of government.

Hennepin Healthcare System

Ensure access to health-care services for all



Ensure access to the full continuum of health-care services for all by addressing racism as a public health crisis through policies that reduce health disparities, increase equity, support the capacity of the health-care workforce, and create financial stability for Hennepin Healthcare System as the state's safety-net provider.

Hennepin Healthcare System

Increase the financial stability of Hennepin Healthcare System.

- Maximize Medicaid reimbursement and supplemental funding sources, including maintaining Medicaid direct payments, to support the largest Medicaid provider system and safety-net trauma hospital to manage the challenges of caring for a disproportionate share of medically and socially complex patients.
- Strengthen value-based-payment arrangements in Medicaid, focused on improving outcomes while managing higher care costs, and recognizing the higher cost of care associated with serving a disproportionate number of Medicaid patients with unmet social needs.
- Preserve hospital capacity for patients who need inpatient care by ensuring patients are able to swiftly and safely discharge to an appropriate setting through streamlining processes and investing in the capacity of long-term care, other residential services and higher acuity mental health settings.

Increase health equity and improve population health through innovation and reform.

- Support state investments to reduce health disparities in mental health and maternal health care, including supporting birthing people experiencing substance use disorder during pregnancy, and expanding trauma-responsive health care.
- Support innovative health-care delivery models aimed at addressing social drivers of health, including medical recuperative care for people experiencing homelessness, expanding the definition of the state plan benefit for Community Health Worker care coordination under Medicaid, ensuring Hennepin Emergency Medical Services are available to residents, expanding

the dental benefit set and investing in children's mental health services in the community.

- Promote efforts to address the state's opioid crisis, including increasing access to medication-assisted therapy, alternative pain management therapies, peer recovery supports, and access to Medicaid while detained pre-trial.
- Support violence prevention measures like hospital-based violence intervention programs, gun-violence reduction efforts, and penalties to address workplace violence to increase the safety of our communities, including our employees and patients.

Support the capacity of the health care workforce to ensure the delivery of exceptional care.

- Promote policies that support increasing staff capacity in the health care workforce, including maintaining telehealth, improving licensing flexibilities and access to interpreters, and the licensure of Certified Midwives.
- Promote efforts to create a health-care workforce that is reflective of patients and addresses any existing workforce and provider shortages in Minnesota, especially in the mental health-care system, including removing barriers to employment for justice-involved individuals and enacting programs that create a pathway for youth of color to enter and stay in all health-care professions.
- Support efforts to increase equitable access to medical education, including maintaining current state investment in Graduate Medical Education and health-care workforce development, the Addiction Medicine Fellowship, tax incentives for educators, and supporting Project Echo for real-time learning for front-line providers.

Health and human services

Improve outcomes for all residents



Ensure that mental health, chemical health and public health systems work to improve outcomes for all residents, especially the most vulnerable. Reduce disparities by supporting preventative models of care and early intervention service to avoid overreliance on crisis response. Advance new policies and funding mechanisms that recognize racism as a public health crisis.

Health and human services

Administrative and technical improvements

- Improve technological systems, including METS, MAXIS/MEC², SSIS, PRISM, and MnCHOICES to streamline and provide efficiencies and simplification to Health and Human Services Program requirements.
- Support changes to align and simplify program access and program rules.
- Maintain state support for local public health capacity to address health crises such as COVID.
- Ensure payment parity in access and delivery of waiver-funded human services and health care programs when delivered virtually.
- Support legislation that aligns the Minnesota Health Records Act with HIPPA for efficient data sharing among educational systems, safety net programs, and state and local public health to connect residents to appropriate services and interventions for improved service delivery and outcomes.
- Expand health-care access and coverage that promote and improve health outcomes by granting continuous eligibility for Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare for one year after eligibility is determined.
- Support comprehensive and equitable capitation rates under Minnesota Health Care Programs by adding social risk factors and revenue risk score adjustments into the rate calculation.
- Support the sustainability of Personal Care Assistant (PCA) services to eliminate service disruptions and ensure around-the-clock access for eligible families.
- Increase state financial, technological, and administrative support to address caseload demand across the disability services continuum.
- Support state investment in care options to better meet health care needs for people transitioning out of hospitals.
- Support legislation that bolsters supportive services for all veterans and their families.
- Support legislation to address the impacts of 2022 cannabis reforms on counties' public health role, including the logistics of taxation, monitoring, inspections, enforcement and regulation.

Invest in children and families

- Support legislation that permanently reorganizes the existing Basic Sliding Fee waitlist to improve access to Child Care Assistance and reduce disparities. Address the significant cost burden of child care for working families, a key factor in preventing communities from building wealth.
- Support state investment in and for community-driven solutions to improve maternal health, birth outcomes, and public health programming (e.g., Child and Teen Checkups, targeted home visiting, doula care), especially for communities of color.
- Invest in the health and well-being of children and families by simplifying the MFIP program to remove structural barriers like monthly reporting. Strengthen family supports by sunseting the Diversionary Work Program and serving all eligible families through MFIP.
- Advance legislation that reduces the disproportionate number of African American and American Indian children in the child protection system and increases frequency and timeliness of reunification.
- Support legislation to remove barriers created by current foster care licensing requirements that result in fewer African American and American Indian foster families.
- Support stabilizing transition to adulthood from the child protection system for county youth.
- Ensure educational stability for youth in foster care.
- Support all gender-affirming care, including comprehensive local implementation of the Governor's Executive Order banning public financial support for so-called conversion therapy. Support changes in state law to provide a permanent statutory basis for the ban including health care financed or otherwise regulated by state and local governments.
- Ensure reproductive health care services remain accessible and safe to any resident in need of this care, while protecting the safety of those providing these legally supported services.

Health and human services

Invest in health through mental health and substance use disorder services access and improvements

- Increase state support to meet the needs of county residents with mental health challenges, including culturally responsive services, early crisis interventions, and services required for stabilizing residents in the community.
- Support state-county partnership to create a financially sustainable operating framework and invest in the continuum of child and adult behavioral health services; support adequate state funding for community-based settings.
- Promote the integration of health care, housing, mental health and substance use disorder treatment to reduce recidivism and prevent criminal justice involvement. Invest in systems improvements that provide access to Medicaid to support reentry of eligible individuals transitioning from correctional facilities.
- Invest in preventive upstream social services to reduce the harmful impact of substance use disorder and the opioid epidemic, including readily available naloxone as an alternative to emergency crisis requests.
- Support efforts to integrate mental health, housing, chemical health, and criminal justice interventions, especially data, to improve residents' outcomes and reduce recidivism.
- Support integrated funding model to comprehensively address the needs of children and families with complex behavioral health issues.

Housing

Support safe and stable housing



Increase state resources to support safe and stable housing for all individuals and families.

Housing

- Increase accessible, affordable long-term housing for residents with no income up to 50% Area Median Income (AMI), prioritizing affordability up to 30% AMI.
- Support the development of a statewide rental assistance program that addresses the housing needs of county recipients of health and human services benefits with income up to 30% AMI.
- Increase housing and related services options for residents with disabilities exiting or diverting from institutional care needing on-site support to integrate into their communities successfully.
- Provide capital support and sustainable operational funding to make safe, dignified, and housing-focused emergency shelters available to residents experiencing homelessness.
- Reform the Housing Support Program to remove the financial disincentives that cause residents to choose unsheltered settings and ensure the program reflects real costs in the housing market.
- Support dedicated revenue to counties to meet affordable housing needs.

Law, safety and justice

Protect public safety



Preserve and protect public safety through state-county partnerships that address funding challenges and support reform.

Law, safety and justice

Increase funding

- Increase Community Corrections Act (CCA) funding to ensure adequate and ongoing state funding for supervision of justice-involved individuals in the community.
- Support investments in community providers necessary to support successful reintegration of justice-involved individuals into the community.

Remove barriers

- Support the unique needs of female and juvenile justice-involved individuals in the community by strengthening collaboration with and funding for trauma-informed and culturally specific community-based programming in support of corrections systems.
- Support statutory changes to remove barriers in housing and employment for the survivors of human trafficking and for formerly justice-involved persons.
- Support the restoration of voting rights to persons on probation or parole for a felony conviction.
- Expand expungement statute to support individuals with housing or employment barriers who have demonstrated a commitment to rehabilitation and community enhancement.
- Support state leadership to integrate human-centered design principles and to coordinate the efficient administration of public safety answering points (PSAPs) across jurisdictional lines.

Improve outcomes

- Support a regional cost-effective evidence-based solutions that delivers better outcomes and lowers recidivism for youth supervised by probation.
- Support legislation reforming use of reasonable force by police officers so that greater police accountability is achieved; support and/or increase the ability of local jurisdictions to remove police officers who violate law enforcement best practices and/or community standards.
- Support legislation that creates a safer working environment for staff.

Taxes

Assure flexibility to serve our residents



Protect state funding for mandated services and assure flexibility to serve our residents without undue reliance on property taxes.

Taxes

- Support County Program Aid (CPA) that funds county-mandated services and reduces reliance on property tax.
- Ensure veterans and their spouses/partners remain eligible for the veterans' property tax exclusion.
- Ensure residents qualify for homestead benefits by providing an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) and provide uniform homestead deadlines.
- Update state assessor duties to reflect modern guidance and standards provided by the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) and allow assessors to access data to ensure accurate and transparent assessments.
- Support efforts to make the property tax system less regressive by expanding homestead market value exclusion — including an index/market-based adjustment to keep the exclusion relevant into the future — property tax refunds, and modifying classifications.

Transportation

Strengthen the long-term value of neighborhoods and communities



Strengthen the long-term value of neighborhoods and communities through strategic public investments in infrastructure that improve mobility and safety, connect people to jobs, reduce disparities, and reduce transportation carbon emissions.

Transportation

- Support legislation that promotes the advancement of the Blue Line Light Rail Transit Project. This includes, but is not limited to, right-of-way acquisition, insurance, liability, interjurisdictional coordination, federal regulatory requirements, and funding.
- Support a comprehensive transportation funding that provides new and sustainable revenue for roads, bridges, and transit.
- Support elimination of the prohibition on state funding for operating and long-term capital maintenance for the Green Line Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) project.
- Support the Metropolitan Council's implementation of Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (ABRT) along various routes in Hennepin County to provide shorter transit times, increased ridership, and expanded mobility for communities along the proposed lines.
- Modify the special distribution of leased vehicle sales tax in the metro area to fairly include Hennepin and Ramsey counties.
- Oppose any increase in weight or size limits for commercial trucks and other motor vehicles.
- Support increased funding for the Local Bridge Replacement Program and the Local Road Improvement Program, including funding for the Hennepin Avenue Bridge reconditioning project.
- Support MnDOT's Corridor of Commerce program and funding to achieve the full corridor vision for projects in Hennepin County.
- Support state investments to reduce transportation carbon emissions, including, but not limited to, vehicle and transit electrification, electric vehicle charging stations, and infrastructure that connects people by all modes of travel.
- Support state investment in the Advanced Transportation Management System including traffic management cameras, fiber-optic communication, and advanced software.

Workforce development

Meet the future workforce needs



Meet the future workforce needs of Hennepin County and other employers and address persistent disparities by connecting well-trained and qualified individuals to high-demand jobs in our region.

Workforce development

- Support efforts to raise and protect wages for residents at the lowest income levels and industries most affected by the pandemic, including increasing the state minimum wage to \$15 per hour, indexed to inflation.
- Support strategies and programmatic changes that align workforce development resources with evolving service needs and priorities and oppose state-level changes that reduce funding for or access to CareerForce centers.

Emergency response and recovery

Support state and federal aid



Support legislation providing state and federal aid to communities, small businesses, nonprofits, and local governments to compensate for emergency protective measures undertaken and to rebuild properties and infrastructure damaged during the civil unrest.

Nonprofit requests

Support the following nonprofit organizations by serving as the fiscal agent for state bonding proceeds.

- Avivo—\$25 million
- Simpson Shelter—\$10 million

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