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FILED
Court Administrator

JUL - 6 2011

By [Signature] Deputy

Achieve with us.

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Special Master Kathleen Blatz
Second District Court
Ramsey County Court House
15 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55102

Re: Housing Access Services

Dear Special Master Kathleen Blatz:

Thank you for allowing representatives of The Arc Minnesota to testify about our essential service, Housing Access Services. In addition to the information we shared about the safety issues for persons with disabilities who are homeless, we wanted to share additional material.

Minnesotans who are homeless not only experience risk to their safety; they are vulnerable to losing their lives. According to a Minnesota Public Radio story aired December 17, 2010, advocates against homelessness "counted 126 people who died either while homeless or shortly after finding housing -- seven more than the year before"... Many of those who died had struggled for years with chronic health problems like diabetes and mental illness, organizers said, and were not recently homeless due to the economic downturn. But cuts to the state's health care program for the poor, and a shortage of affordable housing, have left many people sick and in the streets.

The Arc's Housing Access Services program is essential to complying with U.S. Supreme Court decisions that uphold the right of people with disabilities to live in the least restrictive setting possible.

The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Olmstead vs. L.C. Supreme Court*, declared that "The 'integration mandate' of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires public agencies to provide services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities." The high court upheld that mandate, ruling that Georgia's

Department of Human Resources could not segregate two women with mental disabilities in a state psychiatric hospital long after the agency's own treatment professionals had recommended their transfer to community care. (The Center for an Accessible Society).

The Arc's Housing Access Services program is an essential part of Minnesota's efforts to comply with the Olmstead Decision by facilitating the ability of Minnesotans with disabilities to live "in the most integrated setting."

Thank you again for your consideration of maintaining ongoing funding for the Housing Access Services program.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pat Mellenthin'.

Pat Mellenthin, Chief Executive Officer
The Arc Minnesota

For people with intellectual and developmental disabilities