When Gov. Mark Dayton next week releases a supplemental budget proposal, his bonding provisions should include the critical second phase of a new Dorothy Day Center in downtown St. Paul.

The governor's support will help complete the vision to replace an overcrowded facility with a "campus" that will reshape the way we care for those in need.

On these pages, our approach to state borrowing and spending is cautious. Bonding is borrowing, and borrowed money must be repaid with interest. We support the concept when it works, as intended, to leverage public dollars for spending that has a particularly public purpose. Here, investment will advance the public-private partnership to make the vision real.

"Right now, the state can provide a critical jumpstart and leverage its resources with other local resources and private resources" to make the Phase Two Connection Center happen, Tim Marx, president and CEO of Catholic Charities, told us.

Phase One of the project will replace the existing Dorothy Day Center -- named for the journalist and activist who in the 1930s helped establish the Catholic Worker Movement to aid the poor -- with a new facility that provides emergency shelter and housing. Construction is to begin this summer; the building is expected to open in the fall of 2016.

Phase Two's Connection Center -- to be located nearby -- would serve as a "one-stop" location for supportive mental and chemical health services, job coaching and more.

It received a significant boost in January from the Ramsey County Board, which approved nearly $1.7 million in funding.

Without both approaches, the community will continue to offer relief, but not needed "treatment" to address some of the underlying causes of homelessness.

Without both approaches, "the promise -- the potential -- of the first phase won't be fully realized," Marx told us. "Now we're before the state -- with the support of the city and the county and the business community and others," he said, to advance "a state and local partnership on the Connection Center."

That, he said, "will help us raise significant money in the private sector," noting a commitment that amounts to a dollar-for-dollar match of private-to-state funds.

The request to state lawmakers totals $12 million, he said, with current estimates putting Connection Center costs at $26 million.

The building to replace the current Dorothy Day Center, Higher Ground St. Paul, will have 193 units of housing and 278 shelter beds. The Connection Center will be able to serve 450 people at any given time, Marx said, and the hope is that it will include 166 units of additional housing.

Current facilities accommodate up to 250 people a night, and, when needed, permission from the city has been granted for overflow accommodations for 30 to 50 more at a nearby building. The new campus also would replace the
nearly 100-year-old Mary Hall building, which now offers 155 housing units and 20 shelter beds.

Last session, the project received $19 million to proceed with Phase One. The funding came from Minnesota Housing, a quasi-governmental agency that finances housing for low-and moderate-income residents. It was among awards that resulted from more than $100 million in bonding dollars for housing from the Legislature.

In advancing the Dorothy Day effort, it has been noted that homelessness is a statewide problem requiring a statewide strategy.

Bipartisan support this session for Connection Center bonding -- from lawmakers from both the Twin Cities and greater Minnesota -- is reflective of that thinking. Chief authors are Sen. Sandra Pappas, a St. Paul Democrat, and Rep. Rod Hamilton, a Republican from Mountain Lake.

As Marx says, no matter what you think "from a geographic or political or ideological perspective, there are certain things around which we can all unify. And one of those is shelter and homes for those most in need."

Bonding support from the governor will help make that vision a reality.