

Alberta Darling

Wisconsin State Senator

Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Finance

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, MILITARY
AFFAIRS, AND SENIOR ISSUES
Senator Alberta Darling
Wednesday, May 24, 2017

Thank you, Chairman Testin and committee members for holding a public hearing on Assembly Bills 234, 235, 236, and 237. It's my hope this package of bills will be instrumental in ending and preventing homelessness in Wisconsin.

In 2016, the Federal Housing Administration estimated that at any given time there are approximately 5,685 citizens in Wisconsin who are experiencing homelessness. In order to combat this problem, the bills focus on collaboration, allowing agencies more flexibility to work together to best fight homelessness, and ensuring that resources are going to those most deeply in need.

The first step to addressing homelessness is to provide stable housing for our most vulnerable citizens. That's why Assembly Bills 235 and 236 reform WHEDA's waitlist and grant systems. Assembly Bill 235 strikes the word "transitional" from the statutes relating to housing in order to create more flexibility in the administration of housing grants. Assembly Bill 236 creates a two year pilot program to prioritize Wisconsin's chronically homeless population on the waitlist for the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program. Both of these bills work in tandem to enable housing resources for those who are most deeply in need.

While it is crucial to provide a stable place to sleep, this does not go far enough to address the underlying traumas affecting Wisconsin's homeless families. Assembly Bill 234 and 237 focus on creating partnerships and collaboration to provide wraparound services. Assembly Bill 237 creates a \$75,000 grant for a municipality to connect homeless individuals with permanent employment and additional support services. Assembly Bill 234 creates the Interagency Council on Homelessness to ensure that all of our agencies work together to combat homelessness, instead of working in different silos. Both of these bills will facilitate delivering wraparound services to Wisconsin's homeless in the most efficient way possible.

I'd like to thank Lieutenant Governor Kleefisch and Representatives Steineke, Rodriguez, Pronschinske, and Snyder for their leadership in developing this important package of bills.

Thank you again committee members for your time and consideration. I hope I can count on your support for Assembly Bills 234, 235, 236, and 237.



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TO: Committee on Workforce Development, Military Affairs and Senior Issues

FROM: Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin

DATE: May 24, 2017

RE: Assembly Bill 234

We commend the legislature for taking action on this important issue. The Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin (AASCW) supports AB 234 if amended to add a seat for a private housing provider on the proposed Homeless Interagency Council.

By adding a seat on the Council for a housing provider designee of the Apartment Association of South Central Wisconsin, a key stakeholder group will be represented to add balance and expertise to the council's conversations. AASCW has the most experience of any group of apartment owners in Wisconsin working within the Section 8 program and regularly partners with Section 8 administrators to provide training for our membership to have success with the program.

Adding perspective from the private sector is critical to solving this problem, after all, a large part of Section 8 vouchers are intended to work with private housing owners.

We respectfully request the Committee make an amendment by creating an additional seat on the council that will provide a critical viewpoint that is currently missing.