



TREIG E. PRONSCHINSKE

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 92nd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony on Assembly Bill 125: Grants for Low-Income Housing

Thank you members of the Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate for allowing me to speak on this important bill today and to address the unique needs of rural Wisconsin.

In 2017, the Interagency Council on Homelessness was created by Wisconsin Act 74. The Wisconsin State Journal has called this “the state’s most coordinated, deepest attempt to prevent and curtail homelessness.”

As can be seen from numerous bills, meetings and discussions held on this issue, we can all agree that homelessness in the State of Wisconsin is rising and remains one of the top issues that needs to be addressed. My bill, AB 125, is not the end all, be all of homeless legislation. It is a preventative step in the right direction.

When we think of where the homeless population lives, often times we think of Milwaukee or Madison. While there is a large chronic homeless population in these areas, rates of homelessness have been quickly increasing in rural areas as well. There are many high barriers to affordable housing which are due to the lack of availability of quality housing units for people with low and moderate incomes, many of the buildings in rural areas are older and the lack of transportation only increases these hardships.

Due to these circumstances, many homeless individuals and families live out of sight, under bridges, in tents, in their cars, at motels or couch surf from place to place. But out of sight does not mean out of mind.

My bill creates an innovative, forgivable loan program to create more affordable housing opportunities throughout Wisconsin. Many times, financial barriers to renovating or upgrading a unit to qualify for Federal programs like HUD Section 8 Vouchers or Emergency Solutions Grants can limit low-income housing options from ever becoming available. This legislation aims to help bridge that gap and creates more opportunities for affordable housing to come onto the market.

Again, I appreciate your time and consideration of this important legislation. Together, we can find creative solutions to help Wisconsinites and create opportunities for those less fortunate than ourselves.



**Written Testimony for April 23, 2019 Hearing
Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate**

Dear Members of the Committee,

I would like to thank you for hearing Assembly Bills 121, 123, and 125 today. These three bills, along with the other five bills authorized by your colleagues and being heard today in different committees, represent the culmination of work done by the Wisconsin Interagency Council including the "A Hand and a Home: Foundations for Success" statewide action plan presented last fall. The plan specifically calls for \$3.75 million in new state spending annually. This would more than double the state's current investment in the homeless crisis response system.

My name is Carrie Poser and I am the Wisconsin Balance of State CoC Director. Currently, I serve on the Wisconsin Interagency Council as a member, representing the Balance of State CoC. I realize the term CoC might not be familiar to those outside of the homeless service sector. A CoC (or Continuum of Care) is a geographically defined territory recognized by HUD and required to create and maintain a homeless crisis response system. In Wisconsin, there are four of these CoCs: Dane, Milwaukee, Racine, and everything else falls into the Balance of State. The Balance of State Continuum of Care is a 501c3 non-profit organization with a twenty-one coalition membership. Each coalition represents a specific smaller area – some made up of one county (such as Kenosha, Waukesha, and Brown). Others, covering multiple counties (such as Dairyland – Eau Claire, Jackson, Trempealeau, and Buffalo; or North Central – Marathon, Wood, and Lincoln). There are three paid staff (including myself) and a volunteer Board of Directors. The purpose of our organization is to ensure efficient and effective delivery of housing and supportive services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and provide leadership to the twenty-one local homeless coalitions that cover the BOS territory. I am responsible for the day-to-day activities and operation of the organization. In partnership with the local coalitions and Board of Directors, the goal is to end homelessness in Wisconsin.

To end homelessness, a CoC brings together people working in a variety of sectors in order to develop a community-wide plan or homeless crisis response system. The system should address what happens when people are at risk of homelessness and experiencing homelessness. The system must include prevention, diversion, outreach, assessment, housing search, housing assistance, case management, and follow up services. To maintain this type of system, it requires the input and resources beyond homeless service providers. It is critical that a variety of people with different skills sets, knowledge, and experience are brought together, including law enforcement, social service providers, mental health agencies, public housing authorities,



hospitals, school districts, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, businesses, government agencies and officials, affordable housing developers, universities and colleges, people with lived experience, and other private sector organizations. HUD requires CoCs to carry out a variety of additional tasks, such as set prioritization policies and standards for services, use coordinated entry, conduct point-in-time counts, monitor and evaluate performance, conduct an annual gaps analysis, and consult with the Division of Energy, Housing, and Community Resources (DEHCR) as the ESG grant administrator for the State. In addition, the CoC participates annually in a nationwide competition for federal funds. There are approximately 400 CoCs in the country. The competition requires the CoC to explain their structure, data collection, adherence to HUD requirements, and progress in ending homelessness for veterans, people experiencing chronic homelessness, families, and youth. Individual member organizations can apply for projects that will provide housing assistance funds and case management.

The strength of a CoC comes from the tireless efforts of local leaders, skilled case managers, and dedicated staff committed to preventing homelessness, diverting those that present for homeless shelter when possible, providing shelter and crisis services, connecting people to available mainstream resources, finding housing for people. Providers across the State have maximized the available federal and state resources, using nationally accepted best practices, and radically altered the way they do business - embracing a housing first philosophy and tailoring housing assistance and services to people's unique needs and strengths. Despite all of this, the number of people experiencing homelessness in WI continues to drop by less than 6% a year.

On any given night, there are over 4,900 people in Wisconsin without a place to call home. They are sleeping in a shelter, in their car, under a bridge, in a cave, or in a storage unit. Some may be sleeping in a transitional living program. But all of them lack a safe, stable, and permanent home. Homelessness is a statewide, nonpartisan issue. It impacts every single county in Wisconsin. In 2018, over 20,000 people in Wisconsin received some type of homeless assistance. 59% of those people were served outside of Dane, Milwaukee, or Racine counties. As of yesterday, there were over 2,600 households waiting for housing assistance identified through our coordinated entry system (over 2000 households without children and 618 households with children) in the 69 counties covered by the Balance of State CoC. This also includes 390 chronically homeless households and 124 veteran households. One of the remarkable things about our system is that we have data that can demonstrate the need, identify gaps, and illustrate the performance of our system. We can quantify the need at a CoC level and local coalition level. We can show how many people are identified, what type of interventions are needed, and which tools are missing to meet those needs.



For example:

In Waukesha – there are 411 households (33 families and 378 singles) homeless and waiting for help; 57 of them are chronically homeless and 15 are veterans. This is 16% of the Balance of State CoC's homeless population.

In the Fox Cities – there are 196 households (42 families and 154 singles) homeless and waiting for help; 38 of them are chronically homeless and 14 are veterans. This is 8% of the Balance of State CoC's homeless population.

In West Central, which includes Barron, Chippewa, Dunn, Pierce, Polk, Pepin and St. Croix counties – there are 317 households (56 families and 261 singles) homeless and waiting for help; 28 of them are chronically homeless and 12 are veterans. This is 12% of the Balance of State CoC's homeless population.

While each of these communities have a variety of housing programs and emergency shelter services, there remains a need for different tools and more resources to address the growing need. Lack of affordable housing is certainly a reality, but so is working and negotiating with current landlords as well as creating different types of programming that will help address barriers faced by people precariously housed or in need of more intensive case management than current programming or funding levels will allow.

People cannot contribute to society, achieve their potential, or create lasting change in their lives unless and until they have a safe and stable place to live. I strongly believe that the three bills here today will provide critical support to the homeless crisis response system designed to address the needs of everyone by tailoring help (whether it is housing assistance, case management, or connection to mainstream services) and taking into account an individual's resiliency and strengths. Never before has state funding sought to support multiple components of the system or across a continuum of services. Many of which cannot be paid for with federal funds. Taken as a whole, these efforts will be a monumental movement toward ending homelessness in Wisconsin.

Assembly Bill 121 – Housing Navigation

Ending homelessness requires finding a place to live. For people experiencing homelessness, barriers to securing housing include the cost of rent, the low quality or availability of housing stock, and landlords unwilling to rent to people with lower incomes or who are working with housing programs. Housing navigators address these issues. Housing navigators are different than case managers; they focus not on the specific issues related to a program participant, but rather on increasing the pool of potential housing options while addressing landlord concerns. Housing navigators outreach directly to landlords and management companies helping to bridge the gap between the needs of the business and the needs of people experiencing



homelessness. Through this endeavor, in the few communities that have tried a housing navigator, success has been achieved by creating new partnerships, re-establishing old relationships with landlords, and increasing overall positive relationships among the parties. They meet one-on-one with landlords to address concerns and explain the programming options available. Federal funding does not pay for this service. Yet, without qualified housing navigation to assist with housing search and placement, people remain in homelessness longer and run out of shelter options faster because of this delay. The proposed bill will create a funding mechanism and require the CoC's to develop best practice standards for the use of housing navigators. We will be able to track progress through data, especially as it relates to length of stay in homelessness.

Assembly Bill 123 – Increase Funding for Housing Assistance Program

The Housing Assistance Program (HAP) is authorized under Wisconsin Statute 16.306 to provide grants to operate housing and associated supportive services for the homeless. These programs are designed to facilitate access to permanent housing and self-sufficiency. During the 2017-2019 Wisconsin State Budget, HAP was expanded from only transitional housing program eligibility to include all housing program types. Unfortunately, the funds have not increased and are insufficient to meet the growing need in Wisconsin.

HAP can be used in different ways. An agency can use the HAP funds to provide case management at higher levels and meet more intensive needs than current funding would allow. An agency can create a new housing first-based project to provide housing and services to a population in their community that is not yet chronically homeless but has a long history of homelessness. An agency can create a rapid re-housing project specifically for those struggling with addiction issues or youth bouncing from couch to couch. The key component is that with more funding, communities can look at their data and determine what tools are missing to address their needs and create possible solutions.

Assembly Bill 123 – Landlord Assistance

Federally funded housing programs, such as Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers, HOME Tenant-Based Rental Assistance, and CoC-funded housing programs, require housing units to be "clean, safe, and sanitary." To ensure this, all potential units must pass a Housing Quality Standards (HQS) inspection. This inspection is comprehensive and includes the inside and outside of the unit. Before working for the CoC, I worked for a non-profit housing provider and did HQS inspections in rural northwestern Wisconsin. Once you find a landlord willing to work with you, the last thing you want is to give them is a long list of repairs and costs they must incur for you to sign a lease. Unfortunately, this happens frequently – especially in rural Wisconsin and with private landlords who own a few units here or there. While there are several funding streams that will help build or rehabilitate housing units, there is currently no easily available funding



source to specifically address this type of need. Expanding housing stock and enhancing relationships with landlords is necessary in order to house vulnerable people waiting for help.

These three bills will create or expand a component of the homeless crisis response system across the state for people who slept in their car or a shelter last night.

(1) By creating new funding for housing navigators, people in crisis have a better chance at finding a place to live within their community. Housing navigators are trained to address landlord concerns, mitigate issues as they arise, and act as a liaison between the housing program – the program participant – and the landlord. Housing navigation decreases the time spent homeless. This funding provides for a missing resource in the homeless crisis response system.

(2) By increasing funding for housing assistance programs, agencies can offer different programming specifically tailored to meet the needs of people in crisis. Ending homelessness will not happen with a one size fits all approach, rather we need an intentional tailoring of the right intervention to address a given need. Housing Assistance Program (HAP) funds can create opportunities to link current assistance programs with needed case management services, provide intensive case management services that current funding does not allow, and allows for communities to add different tools to the tool box.

(3) By creating new funding to help landlords make necessary repairs they can provide housing to those in their community. This funding provides for a critical component missing in the homeless crisis response system, a mechanism to increase housing resources currently available but unable to be used.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Poser".

Carrie Poser

CoC Director
Wisconsin Balance of State CoC



WIBOSCO

www.wiboscoc.org

<https://www.facebook.com/wiboscoc/>

Overview

Beginning in 1992, our group met under the leadership of the State of Wisconsin, Division of Housing and a member-based Advisory Board to address the issue of homelessness, organize trainings, and complete the HUD CoC annual application. In 2009, the State stepped aside and the BOS became an unincorporated association. In 2011, the BOS became a 501c3 non-profit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors.

The BOS CoC:

- Covers 69 of Wisconsin's 72 counties (except Dane, Milwaukee, Racine) with the largest county being Waukesha (396,488) and the largest city being Green Bay (105,207)
- Geography covers over 62,000 square miles
- Has a population of approximately 3.8 million people
- Is bordered by the Mississippi River, Lake Superior, and Lake Michigan
- Takes almost 6 hours to travel north to south, 4 hours to travel east to west
- Includes 11 Native American tribes
- Includes 15 different consolidated plan jurisdictions

The membership of the BOS is comprised of 21 local coalitions. Each coalition is required to meet locally a minimum of 4 times a year, although most meet monthly or every other month. Modeling after the BOS construct, local coalitions are asked to bring together local partners, stakeholders, community members to identify barriers, tackle local issues, and address gaps in housing and services. Each coalition appoints 3 leads: Coalition, Point-in-Time, and Coordinated Entry.

The BOS CoC has met regularly since its inception, rotating locations around the state in an effort to bring people together. Quarterly, the BOS hosts a two-day meeting that includes both training and best practices as well as an organizational business meeting. Anyone with an interest in ending homelessness is welcome and encouraged to attend.

Funding

The total CoC FY2018 funding from HUD to the Balance of State and agencies was \$10,365,263. The Balance of State CoC organization receives two direct HUD awards: CoC planning (\$294,945) and the Supportive Service Only (SSO) grant for Coordinated Entry (\$640,469).

The total EHH FY2018 funding from the State of Wisconsin, Division of Energy, Housing & Community Relations (DEHCR) is **\$3,657,448**. These funds support 20 lead agencies (including the Balance of State CoC) and 58 sub-recipient organizations. Services include emergency shelter, rapid-rehousing, prevention, HMIS, and outreach.

For Veterans, there are 5 different Veteran Affairs Medical Centers with 10 housing authorities and one Tribal Housing Authority administering HUD-VASH Vouchers (**343 vouchers**). There are 3 different non-profits administering Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) funds across the Balance of State (**\$3,192,107**)*. *This numbers includes some funding for Milwaukee and Racine.

Point-in-Time

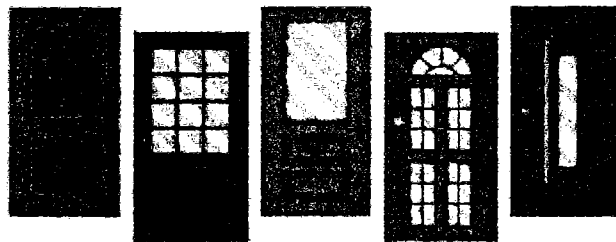
The Balance of State's total homeless population has been decreasing for the past 4 years: 2015 (**3597**), 2016 (**3445**), 2017 (**3348**), and 2018 (**3147**).

The Veterans experiencing homelessness has also decreased: 2015 (**246**), 2016 (**236**), 2017 (**180**), and 2018 (**165**).

Unfortunately, chronic homeless has been increasing: 2015 (**238**), 2016 (**187**), 2017 (**232**), and 2018 (**285**).

New for 2019

The focus for the BOS CoC for 2019 has been expansion of coordinated entry and fidelity of housing first. Additional areas include diversion and prevention. Ongoing collaboration needs include PHAs (homeless preference and development of "Move On" strategies), Childhood Education Providers, School Districts and Human Services.



CoC Funded Agencies (as of FY2018)

ADVOCAP
Central Wisconsin Community Action Council (CWAC)
City of Appleton
Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin (CACSCW)
Community Action Inc. of Rock and Walworth Counties (CAI)
Couleecap
Family Services of Northeast Wisconsin

Golden House
Hebron House of Hospitality
Housing Partnership of the Fox Cities
Institute for Community Alliances (ICA)
Kenosha Human Development Services (KHDS)
Lakeshore CAP
Lutheran Social Services
Newcap
North Central Community Action Program (NCCAP)
Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency (NWCSA)
The Salvation Army
Walworth County Housing Authority
West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency (West CAP)
Western Dairyland EOC
Wisconsin Balance of State CoC
Women and Children's Horizons
YWCA of La Crosse

CoC Committees

Coordinated Entry

- Implementation Team
- 8 workgroups – Marketing, Youth, Evaluation, DV, Veterans, Other Systems of Care, Prevention, Outreach

Discharge Planning

Executive Committee

Emergency Shelter and Diversion

Gaps and Needs

Financial and Audit Committee

Public Awareness and Advocacy

System Performance Committee

Veteran Advisory Board

Youth Advisory Board

CoC Staff

As of 2018, there are three full-time BOS staff:

Carrie Poser

CoC Director

Carrie.poser@wibos.org

715-598-3301

Meredith McCoy

Monitoring & Compliance Coordinator

Meredith.mccoy@wibos.org

608-385-6543

Ryan Graham

Coordinated Entry System Specialist

Ryan.graham@wibos.org

715-225-0164

Balance of State Mailing Address

PO Box 272

Eau Claire, WI 54702

*In 2019, the CoC is in the process of hiring a 4th staff – Grant Specialist.

RACINE CONTINUUM OF CARE

Testimony of Gai Lorenzen on behalf of the Racine Continuum of Care, Racine, WI
AB121, AB123, AB125
Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate Bills
Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Thank you for providing this opportunity to address these proposed bills. My name is Gai Lorenzen. I am here on behalf of the Racine Continuum of Care to speak in favor of AB121, AB123, and AB125.

For over 20 years, I have been involved in efforts to end homelessness in Wisconsin. During this time I have made many observations about homelessness and efforts to address it. We have borrowed and implemented many best practices from other states, and communities within Wisconsin. In recent years we have become much more united on a statewide basis in our efforts. However, there is still much to do. These bills are another positive step toward the development of an effective Crisis Response System that is needed to address homelessness.

In Racine County, approximately 1000 persons experience homelessness each year. The reasons are many, but there are commonalities – mental illness, physical disability, addiction, loss of job – often due to lay-off or being temporary in nature, fleeing due to domestic violence, and unexpected medical emergencies and costs. It is heart breaking to see those who come into shelter – children who don't understand why they can't go home, elderly persons who should be enjoying retirement and not worrying about where their next home will be, the mentally ill person who paces continually due to the anxiety of being in an unfamiliar place with many other people or who repeatedly asks where they are and who we are. It is difficult to look into the faces of those who have lost hope. At the same time, it is a joy to watch those who are provided the tools to achieve self-sufficiency and housing stability move forward and once again have hope.

One of the challenges we have in Racine County, as well as other areas of the state, is a lack of housing that is affordable and habitable. Efforts to implement a Housing First philosophy, which encourages placing individuals experiencing homelessness into housing and then providing supportive services that will lead to stabilization, are often thwarted because affordable and habitable housing is not available. Individuals who have been able to secure an adequate source of income while in shelter, often find themselves unable to exit shelter because they are unable to access housing. This prolongs homelessness and results in longer shelter stays. The affordable and habitable housing that does exist is in great demand, and landlords may not be willing to rent to someone who has turned around their circumstances, but has a history of poor credit, evictions, criminality and other factors. Using the fair market rate for housing in Racine county, the average annual cost to provide housing and supportive services to a

household is \$13, 500. An adequate supply of affordable and habitable housing, coupled with an adequate source of funding for temporary rental assistance and supportive services, would allow movement from shelter to housing, as well as subsequent stabilization, at a much faster rate than we are currently experience.

AB121, AB123, and AB125 will all be beneficial in addressing these issues. They are also important components of the overall Crisis Response System to homelessness. This legislation, combined with other proposed legislation targeted at addressing homelessness, contributes to a comprehensive continuum of services targeted at the prevention and diversion of homelessness, as well as much needed housing and stabilization.

The Racine Continuum of Care is in favor of these bills and these are some of the reasons.

AB121- Housing navigators develop a network of landlords that results in the identification of affordable and habitable housing. They also build relationships with landlords which makes it more likely that landlords will agree to take a chance on risky renters – those with poor credit, and history of criminality or evictions.

AB123 – Increasing funding to the Housing Assistance Program allows the expansion of an already successful resource to additional persons and communities. The rental assistance and accompanying supportive services allow access to housing and services needed to stabilize a household.

AB125 – Habitability issues often exist because many landlords – particularly those involved in small operations, already have a very small profit margin and cannot afford repairs that would improve habitability. Loans provided by this bill provide a mechanism to improve habitability and will place these units back into the low-income, or affordable housing market. This benefits both the prevention and housing sides of the continuum of services needed to end homelessness.

The end result of all of these bills is greater access to affordable and habitable housing, and shorter stays in shelter. A robust Crisis Response System, which includes these bills, is imperative if we are to effectively address homelessness in Wisconsin. Thank you for your attention, and for providing the opportunity to testify in favor of these bills.

Racine Continuum of Care

- In 1996, a group of individuals in Racine County working with persons experiencing homelessness formed the CoC. The purpose was to provide a coordinated approach to homeless prevention and homelessness in Racine County. The group also submitted collaborative applications for HUD CoC funding, and subsequently submitted collaborative applications for State and City of Racine homeless funding. In addition to providing a coordinated approach to homeless prevention, ending homelessness and pursuing non-HUD collaborative funding opportunities, the CoC agencies support the HUD CoC Lead Agency in carrying out the requirements of the HEARTH Act.
- The Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization (HALO) is the HUD CoC Lead Agency. It is also the Lead Agency for State of Wisconsin EHH and City of Racine ESG funding.
- Providers in Racine County receive approximately \$1 million in HUD CoC, State of Wisconsin EHH, and City of Racine ESG funding through the CoC structure.
- The total number of agencies receiving HUD CoC, State of Wisconsin EHH and City of Racine ESG funding is 11.
- In addition to the agencies receiving funding, there are over 30 other entities which regularly participate in the CoC, State EHH, and City of Racine ESG funding processes.
- **Point in Time** - The Point in Time captures the number of persons experiencing homelessness on the 4th Wednesday of January. It gives us a snapshot comparison from year to year.

January 2019	January 2018	January 2017
Total 200	Total 275	Total 194
Unsheltered 12	Unsheltered 10	Unsheltered 7
Shelter & Transitional 188	Shelter & Transitional 265	Shelter & Transitional 187

- Racine's eviction rate – 5.6% -was the highest in Wisconsin in 2016. (Source: Eviction Lab)
- 941 persons were homeless – emergency shelter or transitional housing - in Racine County between 10/1/17 – 9/30/18.
- Over 40% of persons experiencing homelessness identify as having a mental illness, alcohol or drug addiction or a combination of these conditions in Racine County. (CY2018)
- Children make up approximately 20% of those experiencing homelessness in Racine County. (CY2018)

AGENCIES FUNDED by HUD CoC, STATE EHH or City of Racine ESG

Catherine Marian Housing (Bethany Apartments) (City ESG)
Center for Veterans Issues (HUD CoC)
Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization (HUD CoC, State EHH, City ESG)
Hospitality Center
HOPES Center of Racine (HUD CoC, State EHH)
Institute for Community Alliances (HUD CoC)
Legal Action of Wisconsin (City ESG)
Lutheran Social Services (City ESG)
Racine Vocational Ministry (State EHH, City ESG)
SAFE Haven of Racine (HUD CoC, State EHH, City ESG)
Women's Resource Center (HUD CoC, State EHH, City ESG)

TYPE of ASSISTANCE and AGENCY – HUD Homeless Funding

Street Outreach:	HOPES Center of Racine
Prevention/Diversion:	Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization
Emergency Shelter:	Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization, SAFE Haven of Racine (under 18), Women's Resource Center
Transitional Housing:	Catherine Marian Housing
Permanent Supportive Housing:	Center for Veterans Issues, Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization, Women's Resource Center
Rapid Rehousing:	Homeless Assistance Leadership Organization, HOPES Center of Racine, Lutheran Social Services, SAFE Haven of Racine
Supportive Services:	Racine Vocational Ministry (Employment Assistance for Shelter and Rapid Rehousing), Legal Action of WI (Legal Assistance for Prevention/Diversion), Hospitality Center (Bus passes for shelter)
HMIS, Coordinated Entry:	Institute for Community Alliances

SUB-POPULATIONS – HUD and Other Funding Sources – Shelter and Housing

Domestic Violence	Catherine Marian Housing, Women's Resource Center
Youth 18-24	SAFE Haven of Racine
Veterans	Center for Veterans Issues, Veteran's Assistance Foundation (Transitional Housing, SRO), Housing Authority of Racine County (HUD VASH)

CONTACTS:

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Teresa Reinders, Racine CoC Director, treinders@haloinc.org

Wisconsin Community Action Program Association



April 23, 2019

TO: The Members of the Committee on Public Benefit Reform
The Members of the Committee on Workforce Development
The Members of the Committee on Housing and Real Estate

FROM: Brad Paul,
Executive Director

We want to thank the Committee Chairs & Members for accepting our testimony.

WISCAP is a statewide association of Wisconsin's 16 Community Action Agencies and two single purpose agencies working to fight poverty in Wisconsin. WISCAP and its members are committed to creating economic opportunity and supporting community-based solutions to poverty. As a leader in efforts to address poverty in Wisconsin, we keenly understand the need for policies that promote economic equality and that provide pathways for the Community Action network and its many partners to address needs of Wisconsinites with low income. Community Action Agencies work in urban, rural, and suburban communities alike – operating in 69 counties. Local agencies are governed by a tripartite board consisting of low-income individuals, elected officials or their representatives, and community members from among business, industry, labor, religious, law enforcement, education, or other major groups and interests in the community served. This unique structure helps to ensure the whole community is involved in prioritizing, designing and implementing services that are responsive to local needs.

Our comments on the proposed package of legislation fall into two categories; [1] the broad perspective on homelessness policy and [2] specific comments with respect to the individual bills.

[1] Homelessness in Wisconsin

Homelessness and the deep poverty that underlies it is a serious issue in Wisconsin. The Institute for Research on Poverty reports that more than 1 in 10 Wisconsinites live in poverty, including 16.9% of all children in the state; 37.5% of Wisconsinites struggle to afford the necessities of housing, child care, health care, food, and transportation, according to the 2018 United Way *ALICE Study of Financial Hardship*. And, while unemployment remains low, housing costs have increased out of proportion to income. Although certainly a vast undercount due to its limited scope and methodology, the 2018 Point-in-Time estimate reveals that there are close to 5,000 homeless individuals on a single night in Wisconsin. Within that, the Balance of State Continuum of Care catchment area includes the country's 4th highest number of homeless families with children (1600+) in rural areas. Other counts and public systems, including our schools and Head Start programs, report significant increases in children and youth homelessness. Last year, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction counted over 19,000 homeless children and youth enrolled in public schools. Seventy-seven percent were staying with others temporarily due to lack of alternatives, and 7% were in motels when they were identified as homeless. Put differently, 84% of the homeless children and youth in Wisconsin schools are not considered homeless under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) narrow definition. And, despite a national prioritization and targeting of resources, the

number of homeless individuals considered “chronic” by HUD increased for the second consecutive year. In short, these realities are felt across Wisconsin. Any “rural-urban divide” tends to collapse when viewed through the lens of poverty. But cruel data aside, we have barely moved beyond a now 20-year discussion over how to “end” homelessness. Whether we put our trust in public or private-sector solutions we must at least be honest about just how many of our neighbors struggle and how any meaningful response must include all sectors of society. Poverty and homelessness inflicts a near-constant stress that silently assaults one’s dignity, health and emotional well-being. All people of our state who struggle in these circumstances deserve our respect — and our boldest, most innovative efforts to find solutions. To do otherwise amounts to nothing less than cruel indifference — and fails to reflect the deeply caring and compassionate nature of the people of Wisconsin.

With regards to the statewide response to homelessness, local Community Action Agencies provide a wide range of programs and services, including emergency shelter, eviction prevention, transitional and permanent housing, job training, and a range of supportive services. In 2017, Community Action Agencies across the state helped 6,115 people obtain or maintain affordable housing. In addition, 4,025 low-income households were provided with emergency rent, mortgage assistance, and temporary shelter through our network. For their part, local housing authorities in Wisconsin occupy a key place in homelessness prevention through the operation of publicly-owned housing for low-income households. Similarly, housing authorities and private market owners’ alike contract to secure both project-based and tenant-based Section 8 rent subsidies that help families and individuals both exit and avoid homelessness altogether. DOA’s administration of HUD supportive housing resources and WHEDA’s execution of the Federal LIHTC provides further support for the creation of units targeted to low-income households. Additionally, the state’s four Continuum of Care systems (CoC’s) provide coordinated services in alignment with HUD mandates. These include delivering on housing first and rapid rehousing models as directed by HUD and administering the HMIS data tracking system requirement. Finally, a broad and informal network of faith-based, community-based and non-profit organizations that operate outside of the “homeless system” provide crucial support and services that often go unnoticed, uncounted, and largely unfunded by government sources. Taken together, this formation of public and private groups collectively provides emergency and longer-term relief in addressing the very complex and stubbornly persistent crisis of homelessness.

Yet, many of these same agencies are often unable to provide further critical assistance due to restrictive definitions. Since 2001, “ending homelessness” has become a watchword at the national, state, and local level. Unfortunately, this goal has been pursued through federally imposed-priorities that conflict with local realities, forcing communities to adopt housing models targeted to “chronically” homeless adults while ignoring other vulnerable populations such as children and youth, many of whom do not fit HUD’s overly narrow definition of homelessness. Research shows that these children are next in line to become “chronically” homeless adults if we do not step up efforts to help them.

Effective legislation, therefore, must consider - and address - the full realities of who is homeless and the many obstacles that homeless families and individuals face, such as lack of transportation, lack of affordable housing, and limited access to affordable child care, as well as the skills training needed to access well-paying jobs. In bringing together workforce development, case management services, and emergency and permanent housing, these bills help move us off a “one size fits all policy” that has regrettably characterized national policy and the requirements of the “homeless system” to date. As such, WISCAP is supportive of each piece of proposed legislation being discussed in the three committees today. Should these bills move forward, given the complex geography of homelessness in our state and the diverse nature of affected populations and service provider organizations, we encourage maximum flexibility in departmental rule making and the implementation process.

[2] Comments on AB 119-125 and AB 144

Assembly Committee on Housing and Real Estate:

Assembly Bill 121 creating a new \$300,000/year appropriation to help hire housing navigators

Housing first and rapid rehousing approaches by themselves do not create new units or open tight rental markets. Adding additional resources to help identify and secure housing options can play a meaningful role in reducing housing insecurity. Moreover, for a variety of reasons, including past evictions, criminal convictions, and credit history, landlords can be resistant to renting to homeless families and individuals. This bill will add important resources to allow local housing navigators to work with housing providers, prospective tenants, and case managers to identify available units for those seeking affordable housing.

Assembly Bill 123 adding \$900,000 per year to the Housing Assistance Program (currently funded at \$300,000 per year)

The Housing Assistance Program provides grants to private, nonprofit organizations; Community Action Agencies; and county or municipal governments for operating housing and associated supportive services for the homeless. Through this funding, Community Action Agencies and other entities have been able to provide a range of activities in support of housing operations, including case management, rental assistance, and transportation. Flat funded in recent years, however, the program would benefit from an increase to allow for an expansion of housing assistance.

Assembly Bill 125 creating a new program to assist landlords in bringing units up to federal standards for the purpose of renting to low-income

The American Community Survey identifies more than 685,000 occupied units of "inadequate housing" in Wisconsin. Additionally, more than 63% of all housing units in urban areas and over one third of all units in rural parts of the state were built before 1960. Providing loans to housing providers to satisfy quality standards is an important step in bringing more affordable units on line. In addition, we would urge the committee to work with DOA to explore ways to incentivize participation from landlords who do not currently rent to low and moderate income families.

Assembly Committee on Workforce Development

Assembly Bill 120, adding \$500,000 per year to the Homeless Case Management Services Grant program for certain case management at homeless shelters

This has proven to be a successful program and we are fully supportive of its expansion. These services form an especially important integrated strategy when paired with the proposed increase in State Shelter Subsidy Grant as contained within AB 119. We are also pleased to note the proposed flexibility in awarding both the number of grants and amounts.

Assembly Bill 122, requiring that the state identify homeless populations in its workforce plan under the federal WIOA, and that all workforce boards statewide contain a representative of a local homeless response team.

As noted in the Wisconsin Interagency Council on Homelessness *A Hand and a Home: Foundations for Success 2019-2022 Statewide Action Plan* "the best way to prevent a slide back into homelessness once the temporary supports of subsidies and case management are no longer available is through gainful employment." Broad

representation on Workforce Development Boards would improve collaboration among housing networks, job agencies, and employers.

Assembly Bill 144, adding \$250,000 per year to the Skills Enhancement program

The program helps low-wage workers who are employed at least half-time get the training they need to obtain better paying jobs, greater housing stability, and economic self-sufficiency. Skills helps participants, mainly low-income parents, to overcome educational barriers by providing comprehensive case management, as well as financial assistance with tuition & fees, child care & transportation to attend classes. In 2018, program graduates increased their average annual income by \$15,544. Additionally, SEP graduates reported a 400% increase in access to employer sponsored health care. Adding \$250,000, as proposed in this bill, would enable Community Action Agencies to serve more low-wage workers and expand services to more counties. WISCAP estimates over 5 years an additional \$250,000 in annual GPR would enable 370 more participants to complete training - of which 285 (77%) would be expected to obtain new jobs within nine months of graduation. By 2022 the cumulative increased earnings of additional graduates are projected to total over \$8 million – 6 times more than the state’s investment.

Although not under discussion, we urge the committee to draft and forward legislation to similarly increase the Job and Business Development (JBD) program within DWD. This is the only business development program in the state that provides technical assistance solely to low-income entrepreneurs to successfully start or expand small businesses in Wisconsin. Through this program, Community Action Agency staff assist clients to develop business, financial and marketing plans and to access capital through commercial lenders and agency-operated revolving loan funds. JBD began in 1989 under Governor Thompson and has had bi-partisan support for nearly 30 year because JBD directly creates & preserves jobs – over 6,000 since its inception. Since 2006, JBD has leveraged nearly \$11 million in loans to small businesses in over 40 counties and nearly \$5 million in other business development funding. Initially funded at \$250,000 annually, the program sits at \$200,600 a year, a 20% drop.

Assembly Committee on Public Benefit Reform

Assembly Bill 119, adding \$500,000 per year to the State Shelter Subsidy Grant, attaching performance metrics to be determined by DOA on the new money and gradually adding performance metrics to the entire grant, cleaning up administrative code.

The State Shelter Subsidy Grant was established in 1991 and has remained at nearly the same funding level since despite inflation rising by 80%. Emergency shelter plays a critical role in the response to homelessness. Data from October 2016 – September 2017 reveals that 90% of all homeless persons counted through HMIS data were served in emergency shelters. WISCAP supports this bill to provide critically needed resources for Wisconsin emergency shelters, many of these operated by an informal patchwork of community and faith-based providers. In attaching and developing new performance metrics, WISCAP urges lawmakers and DOA to allow for maximum flexibility to ensure that smaller shelter providers, particularly those outside of the CoC system, are not disenfranchised by the new criteria. DOA might consider a set-aside for shelters to continue to operate as they exist or developing appropriate rule language for smaller shelters.

Assembly Bill 124, adding \$500,000 per year to the Homeless Prevention Program for the purpose of prevention funds, and another \$300,000 per year for the purpose of diversion funding.

We strongly support an expansion of homelessness prevention funds which can be used for rent payments, utility deposits and payments, housing placement, case management and individualized services to facilitate housing stability, and mediation and legal services to prevent the loss of housing. With respect to "diversion programming," while there are many examples of successful diversion, we are concerned that diversion can also go wrong in the effort to keep someone out of a shelter. For example, a situation where a homeless family might return to an abuser or a motel with a sex offender. In such cases, shelter and other assistance is the appropriate path. As such, we ask that DOA be given maximum flexibility in designing diversion program rules and grant distribution.



Milwaukee Continuum of Care

Overview and Mission

The City of Milwaukee has been the lead agency for the Milwaukee Continuum of Care (CoC) since 2013. The City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County Continuum of Care's mission is to organize people and resources to end homelessness in Milwaukee. The City of Milwaukee's, Community Development Grants Administration office provides State and Federal funding to local homeless providers.

Point-In-Time Count: Milwaukee's homelessness population has been decreasing in Milwaukee for the past 3 years; 2015 (**1521**), 2016 (**1415**), and 2017 (**900**). At our most recent PIT count, **January 2018**, our count was **871**.

The Milwaukee CoC has over **100 community partners** and **27 committees and task forces** that focus on Milwaukee's 10-year plan to end homelessness.

New for 2019

The focus for the Milwaukee CoC for 2019 will be ***diversion and prevention***.

1. **Move-On Initiative:** We just created a CoC wide "Move-On Initiative" policy that will empower supportive housing tenants to live as independently as possible in the community and make more efficient use of supportive housing units throughout Milwaukee County.
2. **Eviction Prevention Project:** This initiative is led by the City of Milwaukee's Mayors Office in partnership with the CoC to initiate discussion and strategies around eviction prevention. This initiative has local key stakeholders involved: Legal Aid Society, City of Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services, Common-Bond Communities, Legal Action of WI, Community Advocates, WI Policy Forum, Metro Milwaukee Fair Housing Council, Mediate Milwaukee, and others. This initiative has produced a final report with recommendations. <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/no-place-like-home/>

Funded Agencies (19 Total)

- ❖ Aids Resource Center of WI
- ❖ Cathedral Center
- ❖ Center For Veterans Issues
- ❖ Community Advocates
- ❖ Friends of Housing Corporation
- ❖ Guest House
- ❖ Heartland Alliance
- ❖ Hope House of Milwaukee
- ❖ Impact, Inc. (Coordinated Entry)
- ❖ Institute for Community Alliance (HMIS)
- ❖ La Causa, Inc.
- ❖ Mercy Housing Lakefront
- ❖ Milwaukee County Housing Division
- ❖ Outreach Community Health Center
- ❖ Pathfinders (Youth)
- ❖ Richard's Place
- ❖ Sojourner Family Peace Center
- ❖ The Salvation Army
- ❖ Walker's Point Youth and Family Center (Youth)

Milwaukee CoC Staff

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Mailing Address

City of Milwaukee
200 E. Wells Street
Room 606, City Hall
Milwaukee, WI 53202

CoC Committees & Workgroups (27 Total)

- ❖ CoC Board of Directors
- ❖ CoC Provider Advisory Committee
- ❖ CoC Full Body
- ❖ Community Engagement & Outreach (CEO)
- ❖ Point In Time Committee
- ❖ Project Homeless Connect Committee
- ❖ Outreach Workers
- ❖ NOFA/System Improvement Committee
- ❖ Veterans Initiative
- ❖ Income/Benefit Workgroup
- ❖ HMIS Workgroup
- ❖ Coordinated Entry Leadership Committee
- ❖ Move-On Initiative
- ❖ SOAR Collaborative
- ❖ Coordinated Entry Placement Staffing
- ❖ SAMHSA: CABHI (County)
- ❖ SAMHSA (City of Milwaukee)
- ❖ Permanent Housing Committee
- ❖ Eviction Prevention Committee
- ❖ Unmet Needs Committee
- ❖ Rapid Re Housing Committee
- ❖ Youth Initiative Workgroup
- ❖ Shelter and Transitional Task Force
- ❖ Chronic Initiative Committee
- ❖ Housing First Initiative
- ❖ Veterans Initiative/Case Managers
- ❖ Domestic Violence Task Force



Dear Committee Members-

Today, I testify in favor of AB 121, 123 and 125 on behalf of the Homeless Services Consortium (HSC) which is the Continuum of Care for Madison/Dane County.

The solution to homelessness is housing. Our CoC recognizes that placing people in housing alone will not solve homelessness. Rather, we must provide support services that correspond with the household's level of need. Dane County has engaged in improvements of our homeless crisis response system in an effort to be more efficient, effective and ensure households are getting the appropriate level of service. There has been a lot of great work completed, but more needs to be done.

On, April 22, 2019, there were 130 households with children and 760 single adults identified in Dane County as experiencing homelessness. In order to meet the needs of these folks, we will need additional funding resources.

In 2018, the CoC surveyed HSC members to learn their top funding priorities for 2019. The survey was completed by 145 people, including 49 who were guests at The Beacon (homeless day resource center). One of the identified areas for increased resources was Housing Navigation. Dane County's Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness identifies three strategies that include an increase in housing navigation services. An increase in this service will help our community reach the goals of ending Veteran and Family homelessness and can also serve as a diversion strategy to locate permanent housing for those households who are doubled up or self-paying in hotels. We support AB 121 as it will allow new funds to come to our community to connect people to permanent housing which will prevent or end their homelessness.

Survey respondents also noted affordable housing as a top priority. The HSC supports AB 123 to increase funds for the Housing Assistance Program as our Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness has 13 strategies that are linked to an increase in affordability. These funds will allow our community to provide additional rental assistance and supportive services to people experiencing homelessness.

Although not specifically mentioned in the survey responses, the HSC knows that property owners play an integral part in our work to end homelessness. Without units that meet habitability standards, we do not have housing options for people. We do recognize that many of the property owners who are willing to give people a second chance are small businesses who may struggle to afford needed repairs. The HSC supports forgivable loans that will allow owners to ensure their units meet Housing Quality Standards and, thus, are in support of AB 125.

In addition to supporting property owners in bringing their units up to HQS, the HSC believes there is a need to provide funds for a Landlord Mitigation Fund. In housing the most vulnerable people in our community, units are sustaining more damages due to the mental health symptoms people exhibit and/or people dying in units. It takes longer and costs more to turn over units. Current funding does not cover the full cost of damages. Washington State has a Landlord Mitigation Fund that looks to be quite successful and cost effective. (<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/building-infrastructure/housing/landlord-mitigation-program/>). We hope that you may consider something like this in addition to AB 125.

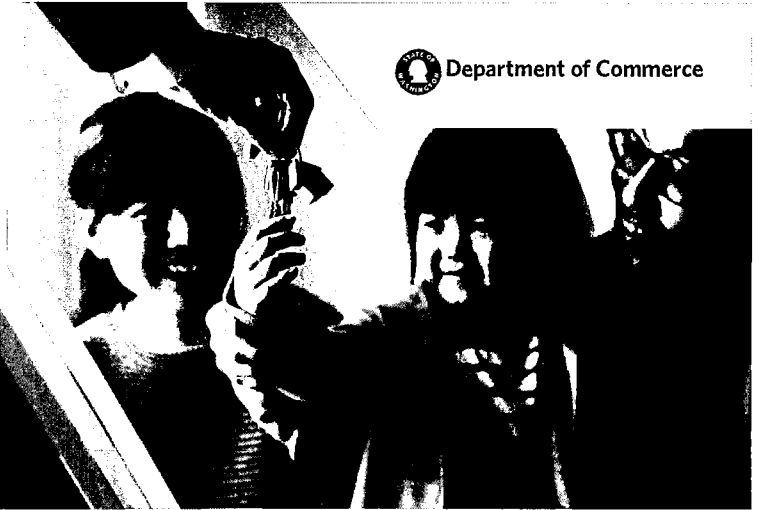
The Madison/Dane County CoC thanks you for your consideration of these bills. We believe that these bills along with AB 120, 122, 144, 119 and 124 will strengthen the homeless crisis response system across the state. A statewide response, including an increase in funding, will help all communities prevent and end homelessness. Thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Torrie Kopp Mueller
Continuum of Care Coordinator
Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County
tkoppmueller@cityofmadison.com

The Right Choice, The Right Solution

Landlord Mitigation Program



Program Overview – Landlord Mitigation Program

Washington State's Landlord Mitigation Program was enacted on March 15th of 2018 to provide landlords with an incentive and added security to work with a Tenant that is receiving public rent assistance. The program offers up to \$1000 to the Landlord in paying for some potentially required move-in upgrades, up to fourteen days' rent loss and up to \$5000 in qualifying damages caused by a tenant during tenancy.

Who can submit a claim?

Any landlord that has screened, approved and offered rental housing to any applicant that will be using any form of housing subsidy program is eligible, except properties operated by housing authorities.

How to qualify for the Landlord Mitigation Program– Be prepared

Commerce will approve and pay claims as quickly as possible. However, failing to provide proper documentation to satisfy the requirements below may cause claims to be denied. Please have the following documents prepared to scan and submit with a claim submission. We will not pursue documentation. If we do not receive all required documents and any other supporting evidence, the claim will be denied and will need to be resubmitted placing the claim at the bottom of the queue. Appeals for any other reason will only be permitted if a judgement for damages is obtained.

- 1) Obtain a Washington Statewide Vendor Identification number
- 2) An executed written Rental Agreement between the Landlord and the Tenant(s).
- 3) A Rental Assistance Agreement (or adequate proof of housing assistance).
- 4) A Rental Assistance Inspection Report from a subsidy program.
- 5) A completed Move-In Condition Report (this is not a Rental Assistance Inspection Report) signed and dated by both Landlord and Tenant(s).
- 6) A Tenant ledger showing any unpaid portion of rent and other charges being claimed and application of Security Deposit (if post-move out)
- 7) Notices to Tenant(s) related to unpaid charges.
- 8) Photos of damage and photos of the affected area following repairs.
- 9) All repair invoices for damages that are included in the claim.
- 10) Complete the entire online claim submission form.

OUR MISSION

Grow and improve jobs in Washington State by championing thriving communities, a prosperous economy, and suitable infrastructure.

PROGRAM CONTACT

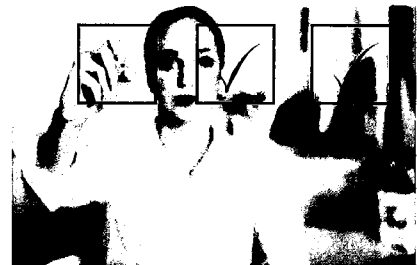
Nicholas Yuva
Landlord Mitigation Administrator
Office of Supportive Housing
360.725-2949
LandlordFund@commerce.wa.gov

Additional Resources:

Please visit our website:
<http://commerce.wa.gov/landlordfund>

or review the Codified law:
RCW 43.31.605

Department of Commerce
1101 Plum Street SE, Olympia, WA 98504
<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/>





All households in Dane County should have the opportunity to secure and maintain safe, stable, affordable housing.

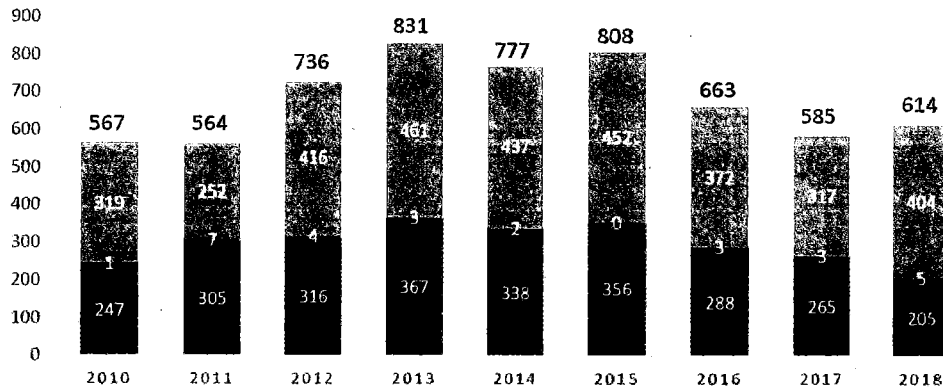
Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County is a partnership of agencies, funders, advocates, and formerly homeless persons committed to preventing and ending homelessness.

How many people experience homelessness in Dane County?

There are three data points we use to answer this question:

1. Point in Time Count: An unduplicated count on a single night of people experiencing sheltered and unsheltered homelessness
2. Annual number of people experiencing homelessness as reported to the Department of Housing and Urban Development
3. Community-wide Priority List: A list of households identified as experiencing homelessness and in need of a housing program intervention

JANUARY PIT COUNTS: 2010-2019



□ Singles: Persons in Households without Children
 ■ Unaccompanied Youth: Persons in Households with only Children
 ■ Families: Persons in Households with at least one Adult and one Child

Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR)

AHAR	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Individuals	1914	1922	1950	2044	1986	1895	1981	1818	1789
Families	1157	1193	1235	1316	1446	1344	1214	1169	1207
Total	3071	3115	3185	3360	3432	3239	3195	2987	2996

Housing Priority Lists

	Families			Single Adults		
	1/15/19	2/12/19	3/15/19	1/15/19	2/12/19	3/15/19
Total	141	144	140	832	822	813
Chronic	23	23	20	250	232	227
Veteran	0	0	0	37	38	36
Youth (18-24)	24	23	23	61	58	54



Members of the Homeless Services Consortium work to prevent homelessness and when it is not prevented, work to make homelessness, brief, rare and a one-time experience. This is achieved through a continuum of services including: prevention, diversion, street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent housing (rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing). The solution to homelessness is permanent housing. Each step of the continuum works with the participant to obtain permanent housing.

The Homeless Services Consortium examines the homeless services system to find areas of improvement and implement change. This work is accomplished through a variety of committees. All committees are open to the public and new members can join at any time. Committees include:

- Education and Advocacy Committee
- Core Committee
- Funders Committee
- Shelter Providers Committee
- Committee to End Youth Homelessness
- Point in Time Committee
- Nominating and Governance Committee
- Community Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Oversight Committee
- Youth Action Board



For descriptions of committees and times of meetings, please visit our website, www.danecountyhomeless.org or e-mail hsc@cityofmadison.com.

Torrie Kopp Mueller, CoC Coordinator
Madison Municipal Building
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd,
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www.danecountyhomeless.org



A Hand for the Homeless

21,906

Individuals experiencing homelessness received services and shelter.

17,905

Individuals stayed in an emergency shelter.

56%

Of those staying in emergency shelters were outside of Milwaukee, Dane and Racine Counties

494

Minors received services as unaccompanied homeless youth.

Figures cover 2017 and are based on most-recent data submitted to the Homeless Management Information System, operated in Wisconsin by the Institute for Community Alliances.



Rep. Pat Snyder (Wausau) meets with constituents to discuss local homelessness services and ways to improve outcomes.

A Cohesive Approach to Combatting Homelessness in Wisconsin...

In April of 2017, the Wisconsin Legislature released a series of bills in tandem with 2017-19 state budget priorities to address homelessness in a statewide, comprehensive way, the first major attention the issue had received in decades.

One bill created a new statutory body, the Interagency Council on Homelessness. Formerly chaired by Lieutenant Governor Kleefisch, the council contained secretaries or directors of eight state agencies and the four Continuum of Care organizations in Wisconsin – federally mandated collaborative zones of housing and service providers and homelessness advocates.

One year to the day of its authorizing bill becoming law, the council released its 2019-2022 action plan, *A Hand and a Home: Foundations for Success*, which was “perhaps the state’s most coordinated, deepest attempt to prevent and curtail homelessness.” The bills in this package were identified as legislative priorities in the plan. They include new programming and \$3.75 million in new spending, more than doubling the state’s current commitment.

State Government’s Action on Homelessness

- September 9, 2016: *Homelessness identified in Assembly Republican’s Forward Agenda;*
- April 12, 2017: *Assembly Republican’s release legislation to address homelessness;*
- September 21, 2017: *Gov. Walker signs state budget into law — includes homelessness funding;*
- November 27, 2017: *Homelessness legislation signed into law by Walker, including creation of Interagency Council;*
- February 12, 2018: *Interagency Council holds inaugural meeting;*
- April 16, 2018: *Interagency Council hires first director;*
- November 27, 2018: *Interagency Council releases first action plan with a number of policy recommendations;*
- February 21, 2019: *Assembly Republicans introduce legislation based on Interagency Council’s policy recommendations, Gov. Evers appoints himself as the new chair of Council*

A Hand for the Homeless

Based on policy recommendations made in the report issued by the state's Interagency Council on Homelessness, the following eight bills include a mix of new programming and a total of \$3.75 million in spending. The legislation detailed below represents a multifaceted approach that has been called "the state's most coordinated, deepest attempt to prevent and curtail homelessness" by the Wisconsin State Journal and further demonstrates legislative Republican's further commitment to providing a hand for the homeless.

Assembly Bill 119

**Rep. Jim Steineke &
Sen. Alberta Darling**

Adds \$500,000 annually to the State Shelter Subsidy Grant program, a 50% increase to the fund and its first major increase in 25 years. It also cleans up administrative code. Most significantly, it adds performance metrics to incentivize shelters to responsibly transition individuals into permanent housing.

Assembly Bill 120

**Rep. Jesse James &
Sen. Luther Olsen**

Adds \$500,000 annually (a 100% increase) to the Homeless Case Management Services Program to assist families in shelter with gaining employment or increasing their income.

Assembly Bill 121

**Rep. Barb Ditttrich &
Sen. Kathy Bernier**

Creates a Housing Navigation Grant, funded at \$300,000 annually, to work with landlords to find available permanent housing units for individuals experiencing homelessness and to mediate any disputes that may arise.

Assembly Bill 122

**Rep. Jessie Rodriguez &
Sen. Dan Feyen**

Directs the Department of Workforce Development to identify and create programs for homeless youth (age 18-24) and adults, catered to those populations' specific needs. It also mandates collaboration between local Workforce Development Boards and their corresponding homeless response systems.

Assembly Bill 123

**Rep. Pat Snyder &
Sen. Kathy Bernier**

Adds \$900,000 annually (a 300% increase) to the Housing Assistance Program, the state's most flexible funder of Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Re-housing, and Transitional Housing.

Assembly Bill 124

**Rep. Jon Plumer &
Sen. Luther Olsen**

Adds \$500,000 annually to the Homeless Prevention Program to help avoid evictions, and creates a new program funded at \$300,000 to begin diversion. Diversion is short-term assistance to steer those who present as homeless into stable housing outside the traditional homelessness system.

Assembly Bill 125

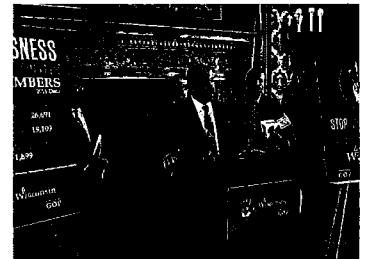
**Rep. Treig Pronschinske
& Sen. Kathy Bernier**

Creates an innovative forgivable loan program, funded at \$500,000 annually, to renovate existing units for use as affordable housing.

Assembly Bill 144

**Rep. Tony Kurtz &
Sen. Alberta Darling**

Adds \$250,000 annually (a 100% increase) to the Skills Enhancement Program to help low-income individuals receive job training and technical skills.



Annualized Data Cumulative data by providers serving the homeless. Totals represent those served in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs between January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2018. Only includes data reported in HMIS.

2018

20,142

people experienced homelessness

Experiencing Homelessness

Caucasian	African American/ Black	Asian	Multiple Races	Native American
50.9%	38.2%	0.6%	5.7%	3.5%

Total Population

Caucasian	African American/ Black	Asian	Multiple Races	Native American
87.3%	6.7%	2.9%	1.9%	1.2%

Homelessness in the Balance of State

59% of Wisconsin's homeless population

46% have a disability

715 veterans

Point-In-Time (PIT) Data A "snapshot" count of those experiencing homelessness on one night. Wisconsin does this count during the last week of January and the last week of July each year. Totals represent unsheltered and those served in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs on Data is from January 23, 2018. Includes both HMIS and non-HMIS data.

P

4,907 people were homeless

in Wisconsin

Balance of State CoC

127 were unsheltered

285 had been homeless for over one year

HMIS data was provided by the Institute for Community Alliances, www.icalliances.org

SOLUTIONS

Eviction Prevention & Shelter Diversion

Increase funding to keep people out of the homeless response system through eviction prevention & diversion programs.

Emergency Shelters

Increase funding for emergency shelter operations, case management to help people in shelter find jobs, & encourage shelters to responsibly exit people into stable housing.

Housing Programs

Increase flexible funding for homelessness assistance programs. Create funding for housing navigation, a critical service that matches people experiencing homelessness with rental housing.

Landlord Assistance

Create a loan program to assist owners in renovating existing units for use as affordable housing.

To All Wisconsin State Legislators:

The Dane County Commission on Sensitive Crimes facilitated the creation of several CCR groups to address different multi-disciplinary issues of concern in our community. One of those addresses child abuse and neglect (CCR-CAN). In May 2018, the CCR-CAN reorganized and created new subcommittees to address specific topics of interest. The Policy/Legislative Subcommittee for the CCR-CAN was given a broad charge: to monitor and advocate for state and local policies that support families and mobilize a response to those that negatively affect families.

This Subcommittee has been meeting monthly since August 2018. The group is comprised of members from many agencies that serve families and children in Madison and Dane County in various capacities.

We have spent several months identifying and educating ourselves about significant service gaps that negatively affect families and children in our communities. Availability and access to affordable housing quickly emerged as a top priority. We reviewed a series of articles on affordable housing issues, as well as a study of evictions in Madison/Dane County by Dr. Revel Simms of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. We heard a presentation from Shawn Tessmann, former Director of Economic Assistance Services for Dane County, now Director of Dane County Department of Human Services. We reviewed the Dane County Affordable Housing Fund RFP (2018), as well as many of the proposals submitted for a recently funded affordable housing project. We reviewed the December 2018 Report of the Interagency Council on Homelessness.

We strongly support the multi-pronged approach of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. Our own smaller scale review of information local to Dane County is consistent with the Council's recommendations for a more comprehensive approach to homelessness including not only support for the creation of more units, but also substantial increases in funding for prevention, diversion, case management and employment support.

As a result of the work of the Subcommittee, our agencies strongly urge you to:

- **Actively support the following legislation:**
 - **SB 119 / AB123:** Provides an additional \$900k/year to provide housing and associated supportive services to homeless individuals and families
 - **SB 120 / AB121:** Provides \$300k for DOA to provide grants to Continuum of Care organizations for hiring housing navigators
 - **SB 121 / AB 125:** Authorizes DOA to award loans to owners of rental housing units to satisfy applicable housing standards; owners renting to families with low-moderate income may have loan forgiven; loans are limited to \$10k loans, no more than 5 loans/person

- **SB 122 /AB119:** Provides additional \$500k/year for grants to supplement operating budgets of homeless shelters
- **SB 123 /AB144:** Adds \$250k/year to DCF budget for community action agencies to provide skill enhancement programs for individuals who work at least 20 hours/week and whose income is at/below 150% FPL. Current services include access to transportation, child care, career counseling, job placement assistance and financial support for education and training
- **SB 124 /AB122:** Establishes the Council on Workforce Investment and local workforce development boards (requirement of WIOA) and ensures that at least one member is a representative of an organizations that provides continuum of care services and that the populations identified to be served by the boards will include homeless individuals from 18-24; children placed in out-of-home care under Ch. 48; homeless adults.
- **AB120;** adding \$500,000 per year to the Homeless Case Management Services **Grant** program for certain case management at homeless shelters
- **AB144;** adding \$250,000 per year to the Skills Enhancement program
- **Actively support fully funding the priorities outlined in the Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness Report dated Dec. 2018 and included in the Governor's Proposed Budget for 2019-2021.**

Sincerely,

Homeless Services Consortium
 Tenant Resource Center
 Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
 Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center
 Reach Dane
 Families and Schools Together
 UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence
 Safe Harbor Child Advocacy Center

WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

THE WISCONSIN HOPE ACT Ending Homelessness in Wisconsin

A Discussion Paper

INTRODUCTION

Despite best efforts on the part of a variety of administrations and strategic methods that advocate for and implement the latest homelessness prevention model, it never seems to be enough. Enhancing supportive services, utilizing a rapid re-housing approach, or promoting the Housing First model may bring about time limited success, but in the end, individuals and families often, due to a variety of factors, becoming homeless again. Immediate shelter needs can provide a roof over one's head – hence the value of Housing First or rapid re-housing. Behavioral issues also endanger long-term housing stability; that is the role of supportive services. But – in the end, it is financial literacy coupled with a consistent, family supporting income that will maintain housing stability and mitigate circumstances that pull people back into homelessness. According to the State Homeless Management Information System only 34.21 % of non-disabled adults entering the homeless service system in Wisconsin are employed and that number increases only marginally to 37.24% upon exit from the system. (Please see the full employment report attached)

All the services above are necessary to reduce homelessness – but those efforts need to have a tie that binds the whole approach together, and that tie is employment. For work able individuals, increasing their personal experiences and values associated with decent employment; preparing them for the current job market; providing appropriate supports so that they can focus on and keep their jobs, as well as developing an understanding of basic personal finances and budgeting, will keep them out of the homeless system. Employment and money management is the “bookend” to all the upfront supports and services in place. **This paper postulates that the main pillars of Wisconsin's strategy to end homelessness should be prevention, affordable housing with appropriate supporting services, and employment with needed service supports. (For example, supportive employment opportunities)**

For 20 years human service advocates and affordable housing advocates have endeavored to create an integrated model to move their clients through a chain of services and supports. This effort has been both laborious and complicated! Human service providers had to move out of their area of expertise, learning new lexicons about the production of affordable housing. Meanwhile it became incumbent on those on the development end to learn about how to produce a quality shelter product that includes a comprehensive service support system.

These efforts have resulted in the creation and advocacy of strategies such as supportive housing, rapid rehousing and Housing First. However, let us consider the following scenario:

If today, we had the resources to provide shelter to every homeless individual and family in the State of Wisconsin would homelessness be eliminated?

The answer would be a qualified YES in that Wisconsin would achieve the HUD defined fanciful paradigm of functional zero. However, if individuals and families time out of their short-term rent subsidies, or they are unable to financially support themselves, or they make decisions that impede their ability to pay their landlords, they run a high risk of once again becoming homeless.

Low-income people often have the cards stacked against them. A family cannot economically survive on W-2 supports and individuals cannot survive on sporadic, temporary day labor. Efforts to move non-disabled persons and families from the streets to permanent housing is really nothing more than a short term solution if that strategy does not involve employment. Without a wage income to pay the rent, rapid rehousing and Housing First programs become a complicated and elongated emergency shelter stay.

Traditionally, homeless advocates have not integrated employment strategies into the quest for ending homelessness. Why not? There are some obvious reasons:

- First, the focus has been on persons with disabilities because of the HUD mandated focus on the chronically homeless and the circumstances that

surround a disability eliminate the “if they would only get a job” sink hole. Disabled persons, by the nature of their limitations become “worthy” of assistance.

- Second, advocates for low-income individuals sometimes become defensive when engaged in conversations about policy that impacts on those who are poor and unemployed. There is the often-voiced lament that, “they’re not lazy-they want to work but...”. And all too often we have seen employment initiatives aimed at the poor be of a punitive nature-the goal being to reduce specific benefits that assist low-income individuals and their families rather than really seeking to help people find and keep meaningful employment.
- Finally, just as advocates once possessed little or no working knowledge of the rules, regulations and implementation needs of housing development, there is not a full understanding of workforce development approaches and practices. In addition, advocates are apprehensive when the subject matter includes ideas such as offering tax incentives to private employers for job creation.

This lack of integration of workforce development solutions into the homeless paradigm has caused a paucity of information about the employment history and employment status of the homeless in Wisconsin. While we have attached the report on homelessness/employment status from the State homeless data system, it is important to note that it does not collect the type or length of employment, time between employment, wage rates and education and training levels – all very important, even imperative, information required to design and implement program approaches that infuse homeless persons and families into the workforce.

However, if there is a commitment to permanently ending homelessness in Wisconsin, a new paradigm must be implemented; a model in which service and support within emergency shelter, rapid rehousing, supportive housing, and Housing First are entrenched at the front end of prevention strategies and at the back end by workforce development and financial literacy; an integrated, seamless model. We believe that the Wisconsin Hope Act lays the ground work for that new paradigm and in the weeks and months ahead we will be focusing on producing an approach that ends homelessness rather than the “fanciful” HUD functional zero goal.

COMPONENTS OF THE WISCONSIN HOPE ACT

PREVENTION:

In practice and reality practitioners, policy makers, researchers and advocates agree that prevention of homelessness makes sense. If one or two months' rent payment provided to a family prevents evictions, the loss of possessions, mitigates children's educational disruption as well as a host of other potential deleterious events, it is the clearest path for stabilization.

This approach, does offer some significant challenges. If not well designed and administered, it becomes a quick solution to every individual who has a five day eviction notice in hand. Not all of those who receive an eviction are appropriate recipients. Fortunately, Milwaukee has a past history of a model implemented in a successful and accountable approach to this conundrum. For instance, one Milwaukee program funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), successfully target prevention funds to households when landlords actually filed eviction actions and focused on those tenants experiencing a temporary loss of income which had been, or would shortly be, restored. This model recognized that first 5 day notices are routine. It does not mean that the household cannot pay the rent. The process also recognized that households with no income, or drastically inadequate income, would be unable to provide sufficient funds for future payments. This model was tested and evaluated in Milwaukee during the height of the last recession and data indicated that the approach reduced evictions in Milwaukee. (Evaluation is attached)

SUPPORTIVE SERVICES:

Homeless persons and families need a variety of supportive services, both free standing and attached to permanent housing in order to maintain housing and familial stability. The lack of funding for supportive services has inhibited the development of permanent supportive housing projects throughout the state. It is hoped that the soon to be proposed federal Medicaid waiver will provide the necessary resources for such services as mental health outreach, AODA services, housing search, housing retention, case management and other supports. These important services must be integrated into affordable housing developments that provide long-term supports for individuals and families most at-risk for homelessness.

HOUSING:

Affordable housing is of course a key component to any strategy to end homelessness. Financing these kinds of projects is still very difficult and new creative sources of revenue need to be considered. We suggest that the state pursue a social impact bond strategy and/or establish a state based Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program to attract private sector resources and a “pay for performance” structure wherein private capital could see a return on investment for their participation. In this structure, a for profit entity, perhaps one which has workforce needs, would partner with a nonprofit to invest in housing that would serve their own employees.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES:

Just as homeless persons and families have barriers to stable housing they also experience barriers to employment. These barriers can be overcome with intensive job coaching and other employment support services. One suggested course of action is that Medicaid funding resulting from the homeless waiver request funds some of these workforce services.

TAX CREDITS:

A tax credit designed to specifically target efforts to employ homeless persons could be provided by the state to employers who wish to be involved in an integrated service model that would include housing, supportive services, and workforce development services.

INTEGRATION OF SERVICES:

A viable model would focus on the integration of a private entity or company with workforce development needs would meet vacancies and employment gaps by creating workforce housing that would include a menu of supportive services that would assist those most at-risk of homelessness.

For example: Foxconn would partner with a nonprofit housing developer and invest in supportive housing developments for the homeless. The State, through Medicaid, would fund the required support and workforce development services. Foxconn would receive tax credits for the number of homeless persons employed. All of this, the housing, services, and employment could be wrapped within a pay for performance model insuring that the housing investor, nonprofit

housing developer, services providers, and employer is held accountable for specific outcome measures. It would not be necessary that the private entity investing in the housing be the same private entity which participates in the employee tax credit program.

CONCLUSION:

So, what if we had a bigger-better magic wand where we have a robust prevention model in place AND moved homeless persons and families from the street into housing provided the supportive services needed AND provided them with employment with the appropriate supports? Could there really be something beyond functional zero?

ADDENDUM:

Upon reflection WCAH would like to reiterate its long-standing support for increased supports directed towards emergency shelters. While shelter services are not currently the homeless service "flavor of the day", they play a vital role in the provision of homeless services throughout the state and are the first line of defense in our battle to end homelessness in Wisconsin. Current data suggests that 90% of individuals and families entering the homeless system in Wisconsin enter through shelters. Yet, emergency shelters for the homeless have been prohibited from a share in CoC funding and have had to rely on the small State Shelter Subsidy Program which has seen no increase since the early 1990's. Why would we want the "emergency room" of the homeless system to be underfunded when it is at this first point of contact that homeless persons and families when they are the most traumatized and require emotional support?

Yes, we need to fund prevention, supportive housing and job opportunities for the homeless, but in Wisconsin, especially during its harsh winters, we need to support immediate and comprehensive services which can literally save lives!

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON WCAH GO TO WCAHWI.ORG

Percent of Eligible, Employed (at entry) Homeless Persons in Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

By Clients:

% of Employed Clients in WI	34.21%
Type of Homeless Assistance	Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	0%
Day Shelter (HUD)	100%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	29.42%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	51.5%
Other (HUD)	21.43%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	61.54%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	58.47%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	28.03%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	37.25%
Safe Haven (HUD)	0%
Services Only (HUD)	32.17%
Street Outreach (HUD)	16.67%
Transitional housing (HUD)	40.5%

By Households: (single clients each have an individual household, each family is combined into 1 household)

% of Employed Households in WI	36.22%
Type of Homeless Assistance	Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	0.00%
Day Shelter (HUD)	66.67%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	31.25%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	58.7%
Other (HUD)	22.37%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	60.71%

Percent of Eligible, Employed (at entry) Homeless Persons in Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

Type of Homeless Assistance	HH Employment %
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	58.04%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	28.32%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	39.75%
Safe Haven (HUD)	8.82%
Services Only (HUD)	33.33%
Street Outreach (HUD)	17.22%
Transitional housing (HUD)	41.99%

Type of Homeless Assistance	Singles/Families	HH Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	Singles	0.00%
Day Shelter (HUD)	Singles	66.67%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	Families	34.98%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	Singles	29.58%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	Families	59.43%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	Singles	57.12%
Other (HUD)	Families	38.46%
Other (HUD)	Singles	19.05%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	Families	60%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	Singles	61.11%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	Families	55.56%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	Singles	60.34%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	Families	25.29%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	Singles	29.69%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	Families	42.13%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	Singles	35.82%
Safe Haven (HUD)	Singles	8.82%
Services Only (HUD)	Families	46.67%
Services Only (HUD)	Singles	30.07%
Street Outreach (HUD)	Families	29.82%
Street Outreach (HUD)	Singles	16.75%
Transitional housing (HUD)	Families	43.59%

**Percent of Eligible, Employed (at entry) Homeless Persons
in Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17**

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

Type of Homeless Assistance	Singles/Families	JH Employment %
Transitional housing (HUD)	Singles	40.17%

Singles/Families	JH Employment %
Families	44.79%
Singles	30.14%

Percent of Eligible, Employed (at exit) Homeless Persons in Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

By Clients:

% of Employed Clients In WI	
37.24%	
Type of Homeless Assistance	Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	0.00%
Day Shelter (HUD)	100%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	33.74%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	51.05%
Other (HUD)	24.19%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	65.38%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	62.7%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	26.92%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	47.06%
Safe Haven (HUD)	0%
Services Only (HUD)	37.99%
Street Outreach (HUD)	18.18%
Transitional housing (HUD)	51.62%

By Households: (single clients each have an individual household, each family is combined into 1 household)

% of Employed Households In WI	
39.74%	
Type of Homeless Assistance	HH Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	0.00%
Day Shelter (HUD)	66.67%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	35.3%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	58.46%
Other (HUD)	22.39%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	64.29%

**Percent of Eligible, Employed (at exit) Homeless Persons in
Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17**

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

Type of Homeless Assistance	EH Employment %
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	68.87%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	28.22%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	50.17%
Safe Haven (HUD)	10%
Services Only (HUD)	37.75%
Street Outreach (HUD)	18.16%
Transitional housing (HUD)	52.53%

Type of Homeless Assistance	Singles/Families	EH Employment %
Coordinated Assessment (HUD)	Singles	0.00%
Day Shelter (HUD)	Singles	66.67%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	Families	41.02%
Emergency Shelter (HUD)	Singles	32.68%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	Families	60.8%
Homelessness Prevention (HUD)	Singles	53.75%
Other (HUD)	Families	29.41%
Other (HUD)	Singles	20%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	Families	66.67%
PH - Housing only (HUD)	Singles	63.16%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	Families	69.09%
PH - Housing with services (no disability required for entry) (HUD)	Singles	68.63%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	Families	23.2%
PH - Permanent Supportive Housing (disability required for entry) (HUD)	Singles	32.1%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	Families	52%
PH - Rapid Re-Housing (HUD)	Singles	46.89%
Safe Haven (HUD)	Singles	10%
Services Only (HUD)	Families	51.52%
Services Only (HUD)	Singles	33.9%
Street Outreach (HUD)	Families	35.19%
Street Outreach (HUD)	Singles	17.58%

**Percent of Eligible, Employed (at exit) Homeless Persons in
Wisconsin: 10/1/16 - 9/30/17**

Eligibility determined by person being 18 years of age or older and not having a disabling condition.

Type of Homeless Assistance	Singles/Families	JH Employment %
Transitional housing (HUD)	Families	55.47%
Transitional housing (HUD)	Singles	48.87%

Singles/families	JH Employment %
Families	50.03%
Singles	32.38%

**Evictions in Milwaukee County 2008 – 2009:
Estimating the Impact of Aid from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act**

A Policy Report Prepared for Community Advocates
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

by

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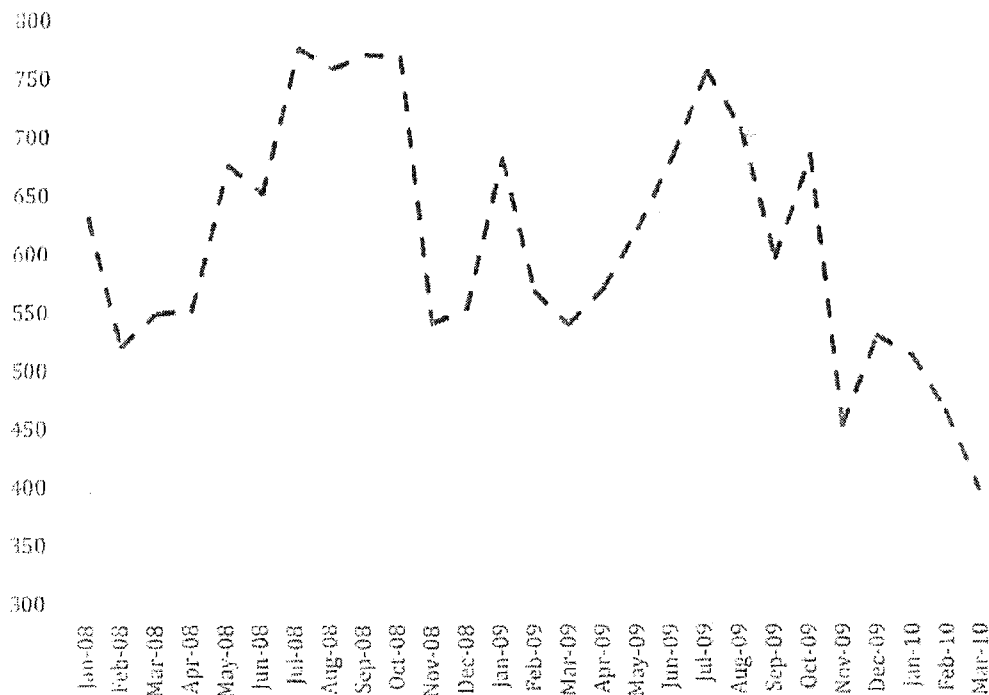
July 2010

Evictions in Milwaukee County: January 2008 to March 2010

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 allocated \$1.5 billion for rental assistance and housing relocation, nationwide. In Milwaukee, Community Advocates began distributing stimulus funds in August 2009 in the form of eviction assistance aid. Did evictions decrease after aid began to be dispersed?

Figure 2 graphs the number of defendants in closed eviction cases from January 2008 to March 2010. The purple line springing from August 2009 indicates the approximate time stimulus aid began to be distributed in Milwaukee.

Figure 2. Defendants in Closed Eviction Cases, Milwaukee County, January 2008- March 2010



Source: Milwaukee County Eviction Records, 2008-2010; Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Courts

It is clear that the number of evictees in Milwaukee County decreased considerably after August 2009. In most years, the number remains high until around October. (Figure 2 shows that this was the case in 2008, for example). In 2009, however, the number of evictees declined after August. It peaked in October and again in January (following a normal seasonal pattern), but the overall shape of the pattern was that of a decline.³

³ The number of evictees for March 2010 should be viewed somewhat skeptically. Although the data were extracted from Wisconsin Circuit Court Access (CCAP) in June 2010, presumably giving the system enough time to record eviction cases that occurred in March, the relatively low count for March may in part be a reflection of a lag in the system (and thus an underestimation of the total number of evictees for that month).

Table 1. Defendants in Closed Eviction Cases,
Milwaukee County, January 2008- March 2010

	2008	2009	2010
January	629	680	511
February	519	566	463
March	547	538	396
April	550	569	
May	674	620	
June	650	681	
July	774	755	
August	757	705	
September	769	595	
October	767	683	
November	539	451	
December	552	528	

Source: Milwaukee County Eviction Records, 2008-2010;
Milwaukee County Clerk of Circuit Courts

Conclusion

We have seen that there has been a drop in the number of defendants in eviction cases in Milwaukee County since August 2009, the month aid from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act began to be distributed, and that this drop cannot be explained by the normal eviction cycle. Data limitations prevent us from attributing this decline solely to aid from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. But the fact that the number of evictees began to decrease at the exact time stimulus aid began to be dispersed cannot be ignored.



Hope House of Milwaukee, Inc.

209 West Orchard Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204

Ending homelessness and creating healthy communities

Testimony of Wendy Weckler, Chair, Milwaukee Shelter & Transitional Housing Task Force, & Executive Director, Hope House of Milwaukee, Inc.
AB 121, 123 & 125—Housing Navigators, Homeless Assistance Program & HQS Low-Income Housing Loan Program
Assembly Committee on Housing & Real Estate
Tuesday, April 23, 2019

Chairman Jagler & Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the 3 bills before you today that will increase resources for the Homeless Crisis Response System throughout the State of Wisconsin. On behalf of the Milwaukee Shelter and Transitional Housing Task Force, it is our hope that these bills will be a key step in the journey towards ending and preventing homelessness in our state.

As you know, AB 121 adds \$300,000 annually to hire housing navigators. These navigators are critical to helping homeless individuals and families, often with multiple barriers to housing, like evictions, large family size, low income, etc. find decent, permanent housing options.

AB 123 adds \$900,000 a year, tripling the current investment in rental assistance and supportive services. This is a proven way to aid communities in ending homelessness.

AB 125 will create a loan program that allows landlords to bring their units up to Housing Quality Standards. Often landlords renting to individuals receiving a rent assistance voucher through one of these programs are not seeing large profits. Rents must fall within the Fair Market Rent and Rent Reasonableness Guidelines. This loan program incentivizes landlords to rent to our clients, while increasing the value and quality of the housing stock available.

My agency, Hope House of Milwaukee has run since 2015, a HUD funded Rapid Rehousing Program. The 3-year data for this program shows us that moving the most vulnerable families quickly into their own unit, providing a rent subsidy based on income, and intensive supportive services allows them to succeed. At the one-year mark, 90% of our families remain permanently housed either in the unit they rented through us or another of their choosing, and at the 3-year mark, 85% of our families have not touched the shelter system again.

Phone (414) 645-2122

www.hopehousemke.org

Fax (414) 645-2249



These 3 bills are a part of a \$3.75 million total proposal to the Homeless Crisis Response System. In Wisconsin homelessness is not just an urban or rural problem. Service providers throughout the state, including all of those that receive current state funding, enter their data into the Homeless Management Information System, operated in Wisconsin by the Institute for Community Alliances. Their most recent report from July of 2018, containing the 2017 data, shows us that:

- 21,906 clients experiencing homelessness received services and shelter
- 17,905 men, women, and children stayed in an emergency shelter
- 56% of the clients in emergency shelter were outside of Milwaukee, Dane, and Racine county.
- 42% of persons experiencing homelessness were members of a family
- 494 children, under the age of 18, received services as a homeless, unaccompanied youth

While these numbers seem high, across the country we are seeing that an investment in housing first, prevention, and diversion can end homelessness. In 2017, the Wisconsin Legislature created the Interagency Council on Homelessness to help guide our state towards this goal using a Housing First Model. Now is the time to take further action and begin ending homelessness in our State.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and please support AB 121, 123, & 125.

MaiGer Moua - Testimony for Public Hearing on Homelessness Legislation, April 23, 2019

Good afternoon. Thank you for this opportunity to speak and share information with you today. My name is MaiGer Moua. I live in the Village of Rothschild. I am a constituent of Representative Pat Snyder.

I am employed at United Way of Marathon County. My work there includes supporting efforts that address affordable housing and homelessness and referring people to housing programs. In 2018, 2-1-1, an information and referral helpline, responded to 5,242 requests from Marathon County residents, providing 9,599 referrals to health and human services. Of the total referrals provided, 2,742, or 29% (close to 1/3), were referrals to housing programs, such as rent payment assistance and community shelters. Three hundred twenty-one requests, or 10% of total requests for housing assistance, were not met by existing programs or, there were no programs available to help meet the needs. For example, people who needed emergency homeless shelters were not able to receive help because the shelters were full, they did not meet eligibility requirements, or there were extenuating circumstances that made it challenging for people to access shelter services. According to an annual shelter survey that the United Way Housing and Homelessness Coalition conducted in 2018, 676 people (411 adults and 100 children – duplicated numbers) stayed at the local shelters in Wausau: the Community Warming Center, The Women's Community, and The Salvation Army Transitional Living Center. People become homeless for various reasons and they include: being on a fixed income (ex: SSI or disability income) or having an unstable income (work for companies that offer irregular hours); substance abuse and mental health challenges; criminal record; relationship problems. Eighty three percent of those surveyed indicated that they have a GED/high school diploma or college degree. Their most immediate needs were securing permanent housing, transportation, access to emergency shelters, food and health care. Local needs for shelter, housing, and supportive services exceed available services. Catholic Charities Community Warming Center opens from Nov. 1 – April 30; The Women's Community serves only victims and survivors of abuse; The Salvation Army Transitional Living Center has one family room. These shelter programs, along with housing providers like North Central Community Action Program and other non-profit organizations, work to reduce the length of homelessness by helping people get into permanent housing.

It is important that our state and elected officials like yourself continue to support every resident, including individuals and families that are experiencing housing challenges and homelessness. A local shelter guest who volunteered to take the annual coalition shelter survey commented, "I was in the past with no job or place to live, now I have a job and going to get a permanent place to live. In the future, I am going to volunteer to give back what the community gave me – a brand new life and happy life." Any enhancements to current or future programs is good for families and our communities, like Assembly Bill 123 and the other homelessness bills presented today. When resources are available and accessible to homeless individuals and families, parents and caregivers can receive the support they need to become and stay employed; by being safely housed and getting the supportive services they need, children can have a healthy development and remain on the path toward success. Our communities are stronger and more prosperous when individuals and families have access to supportive services that can help them achieve housing and financial stability.

Thank you for your time.

TUESDAY, April 23, 2019

State Capitol in Madison Assembly Committee

testimony by Scott Peeples, Senior Director of Community Engagement
for Pillars, 605 E. Hancock St., Appleton, WI

**10 a.m. Assembly Committee on Housing and Real
Estate**

Rep. John Jagler (R-Watertown), Chair

Rep. Scott Allen (R-Waukesha), Vice-Chair, Rep. Romaine Quinn (R-Barron), Rep. Rob Brooks (R-Saukville), Rep. David Murphy (R-Greenville), Rep. Treig Pronschinske (R-Mondovi), Rep. Amanda Stuck (D-Appleton), Ranking Member, Rep. JoCasta Zamarripa (D-Milwaukee) and Rep. Kalan Haywood (D-Milwaukee)

Room 400 Northeast

My name is Scott Peeples. I'm with Pillars, an organization consisting of two homeless shelters, a resource center (or day shelter) and over 100 transitional and affordable housing units. Our service area is Appleton and the Fox Cities area.

In 2018, we served over 1,200 different people in our two shelters 436 in our housing programs.

Before I offer support for Bill 121, Bill 123 and Bill 125, I want to express my excitement that there is significant bipartisan support for these bills and that is significant. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be here today.

My community, the Fox Cities, has a high standard on this issue. When one person is identified as sleeping outside, that is one too many and our street outreach team is doing everything we can to get that person into a shelter . . . or into housing.

When Matthew Desmond, author of the Pulitzer Prize winning book “Evicted,” came to Appleton recently, our community rallied around his message. Through his investigative research with eight low income families in Milwaukee, he determined that eviction from housing is not just a cause of poverty but rather a direct consequence of poverty. But it doesn’t have to happen. We’re here today to support programs that would keep people in housing -- or get them BACK into their own homes – as quickly as possible. That’s the mission of my organization, Pillars, and, clearly, that is the intention of these bills.

At Pillars, we are proud to have a staff member employed as a Housing Navigator, which **Bill 121** addresses. I support increased state funding at the level specified in this bill.

Our housing navigator has been on the job for over a year now. His role is to assist clients – especially chronically homeless individuals – find housing by building relationships with landlords in our community. Truly, it’s a difficult nut to crack: Many times, people with a history of homelessness also have a history of being evicted or they’ve spent time in jail or prison. These are not protected groups of people so landlords freely choose not to rent to them.

Our housing navigator has been tackling the issue one landlord at a time, building a network of property owners who are at least willing to listen when one of our clients with significant barriers comes knocking. Currently, he has a list of close to 30 apartment units or complexes that are willing to work with our clients. It’s a relationship that wasn’t there before. The landlords appreciate the accessibility of our staff and the clients – some of whom are staying in our Adult Shelter -- are excited that, once they have saved some money, they have a fair shot at finding someone that will rent to them.

I also support Bill 123 -- This bill would help facilitate movement of people experiencing homelessness from shelters into transitional and other types of housing. Right now, shelter stays are longer than they have to be because clients lack resources to move into housing. This bill supports the concept of "housing first" – getting folks into a home of their own, where they can then continue to focus on issues such as addiction, mental illness and other disabling factors. Programs such as our "It Takes a Village program" provide weekly case management so clients know they have a support system when they don't know how to access resources, such as our local food pantry, or when they are having thoughts of suicide.

The final bill you're considering this morning, Bill 125, provides monetary assistance to landlords so they have an incentive to fix up their properties. While we own some of our properties, currently, Pillars contracts with the owners of 27 units -- third party landlords – who have taken the public-spirited approach by renting to people with significant barriers. But the cost of meeting housing quality standards can be debilitating. As Matthew Desmond highlighted in "Evicted," there can be financial advantage to be a "SLUM LORD." The loan program supported by this bill would be a disincentive to slum lords, increase the safety and security of low-income housing units and allow us – and people in other communities – to work with more people. It's a win-win scenario: getting people living on the streets into quality housing in some cases and keeping people from ever losing their housing, in others.

I'd like to conclude with a quote by Walt Whitman:

"Every inch of space is a miracle."

At our adult shelter, if we have 45 men and women share space on the floor, there may be two inches of space between their mats. If we're at

60 clients, like we've been the last six months or so, there is about half an inch of space between mats. Every inch of space truly is a miracle. By supporting these bills, you give hope to people experiencing homelessness and housing instability As we appreciate the small things in life – a little more room at night – we can build bigger dreams of having a place to call a home, their own places.

A home, which Matthew Desmond describes as “the wellspring of personhood.”

Thank you