



Coalition on Homelessness
and Housing in Ohio
COHHIO

For Immediate Release
August 29, 2006

CONTACT: 614-280-1984, Bill Faith, Executive Director
Suzanne Gravette Acker, Communications Director

Domestic Programs Need Attention as Poverty Climbs in Ohio

COLUMBUS - With news that Cleveland has replaced Detroit as America's poorest city and with additional data released today by the U.S. Census Bureau, it is evident that poverty has worsened in Ohio and requires immediate attention on a state and federal level, said Bill Faith, executive director of COHHIO.

Cleveland's median household income is at the bottom of all cities, according to the census bureau's American Community Survey. Statewide, the median household income in 2005 went down 2.2 percent, to \$44,349. The number of Ohioans living in poverty increased by .05 percent, bringing the total number to 1,450,650. (The poverty threshold for a family of four is a household income of \$19,971.)

"It's getting harder for Ohioans to obtain affordable health care and housing," Faith said. "We're simply not doing a good job of fighting poverty in our state or nation." Faith called on congressional candidates to make education, health care, housing and jobs the centerpiece of their election campaigns, saying, "An investment in the priorities of working families remains unfinished business by congressional leaders. This continues to plague our state."

Faith suggested strategic investments in education, health care and affordable housing as starting points.

"Education -- and especially higher education -- is the best path out of poverty," said Faith. Yet, according to the College Board, a nonprofit membership association in New York City, 36 percent of the average Ohio family income is required to pay for annual expenses at a four-year public university, after accounting for financial aid. Tuition and fees for college in the Midwest increased 65% over the last 10 years.

"We're pricing our kids out of a college education then relegating them to low wage jobs void of health care benefits," said Faith. Education and health care programs are administered by the state, but are largely federal programs. "It's time for the federal government to invest in an agenda that fosters success across all socio-economic strata, not just the rich," he said.

Over the last four years, a staggering 181,000 non-elderly Ohioans lost their employer-sponsored health insurance, driving many toward private, high-premium insurance plans. The number of flat-out uninsured non-elderly adults in the state grew by 114,000 during the same time period. "The number of uninsured Ohioans is a direct correlation to the number of impoverished Ohioans. The number will continue to grow the longer it's ignored by policymakers."

In 2005, the National Low Income Housing Coalition in Washington, D.C. estimated that only one in four Ohioans needing subsidized housing receive federal assistance. Ohio's 716,000 lowest wage earners make nowhere near the \$12.14 per hour required to afford the fair market value of a two-bedroom apartment.

“Many want to celebrate this 10th anniversary of welfare reform,” Faith said, “but data released today is a stark reminder of how much further we need to go. We have more people working, but in jobs that pay wages that keep them in poverty. Our congressional leaders need a proactive agenda to invest in American families in terms of health care, higher education, better jobs and more affordable housing.”

-30-

175 S. Third St., Columbus, Ohio 43215
Ph: 614-280-1984 Fax: 614-463-1060
For more information about COHHIO, please visit www.cohhio.org