

Thursday, May 3, 2018

## Report Finds Ohio Health Care System Lagging, But Prevention And Treatment Up; Groups Urge Housing Funds...

A report this week by the Commonwealth Fund rated Ohio 36th in its health care performance, with the state struggling in terms of healthy lives and health disparities.

Ohio saw improvement in prevention and treatment, however, the **scorecard** found.

The state's health care system performed best in categories that included employee insurance costs as a share of income, hospitals' 30-day mortality and the number of patients discharged without instructions.

Ohio was most improved in dealing with home health patients who lacked improved mobility, nursing home residents using antipsychotic drugs and in the number of Medicare beneficiaries receiving high-risk drugs.

Healthy lifestyle issues, including drugs, continued to drag the state down in rankings. The report found the state performed worst in avoidable emergency department visits for seniors, the number of adults who smoke and suicide, alcohol and drug use deaths.

The death rate from suicide, alcohol and drug use was also among the factors that worsened the most in the report, along with the number of home health patients with a hospital admission.

**Housing Push:** A group of nonprofits and businesses asked Ohio's congressional delegation this week to boost funding for fighting homelessness and housing insecurity.

The 252 organizations **wrote** to Congress during National Housing Week of Action to back an increase for federal programs that support housing for people with disabilities, homeless veterans, low-income seniors and others.

"Whoever wins next week's primary election has a big problem on their hands. Rents keep rising, but renters' wages have barely budged in over a decade, and we now have 400,000 families in Ohio spending over half their income on rent," Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, said in a statement. "We need our political leaders to close the affordable housing gap so we can make real progress on the opiate epidemic, rising health care costs, struggling schools and the high rate of infant mortality."

The groups cited the importance of housing stability for children.

"We know that children who move a lot because their families can't afford the rent have higher rates of stress, tend to exhibit more behavioral issues and absenteeism, and usually perform more poorly in the classroom," said Brandi Slaughter, CEO of Voices for Ohio's Children. "But we can change these negative outcomes by ensuring that all families have access to decent, affordable housing."

Larke Recchie, CEO of the Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, also said the homeless rate among Ohioans 65 and older is expected to double by 2050.

"The growing cost of housing is increasing the risk of homelessness, especially for seniors living on a fixed income," she said. "Increasing federal housing assistance is critical to help ensure that older Ohioans can afford the food and health care they need in order to stay healthy and remain in their own homes."

**Wheelchair Bill:** A state representative on Thursday applauded **Gov. John Kasich's** signing Wednesday of legislation she sponsored to improve transportation options for Ohioans in wheelchairs. (See **Gongwer Ohio Report, May 2, 2018**)

The proposal (**HB 195**), sponsored by **Rep. Catherine Ingram** (D-Cincinnati) and **Rep. Bill Seitz** (R-Cincinnati), would allow Ohioans who use wheelchairs to use whatever transportation service meets their needs, including ridesharing services and taxis, for non-emergency medical transportation.

"I am grateful my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and the governor agreed that all Ohioans deserve equal access to the transportation options that best meets their needs," Rep. Ingram said in a statement. "House Bill 195 will improve the lives of Ohioans who use wheelchairs by expanding their transportation options to include taxis or newer ride sharing services like Lyft and Uber, making it easier and less expensive for them to get to medical appointments and other important engagements."