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Over 250 Organizations Speak Out on National Housing Week of Action *Call For Increased Funding for Homelessness and Affordable Housing*

A coalition of hundreds of Ohio nonprofits and businesses urged members of the state's congressional delegation Tuesday to increase funding to fight homelessness and housing insecurity.

[The letter](#) signed by 252 organizations representing many sectors calls on members of Congress to support a reasonable increase in funding for federal programs that expand access to affordable housing for people with disabilities, homeless veterans, low-income seniors and working families, and other vulnerable Ohioans.

The letter, which was sent on the first day of the National Housing Week of Action, reflects growing awareness that safe, decent, affordable housing is essential for positive outcomes in health care and education, as well as a growing economy. However, housing has become increasingly out of reach for lower income Ohioans.

Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing, said the shortage of affordable housing is a drag on Ohio's economy that requires attention from state and federal policymakers.

"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," he said. "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."

Brandi Slaughter, CEO of Voices for Ohio's Children, said housing conditions and stability play a very important role in children's ability to succeed in school and work throughout their lives.

"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,” she said. “But we can change these negative outcomes by ensuring that all families have access to decent, affordable housing.”

Larke Recchie, CEO of Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging, said the rate of homelessness among people age 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.”

[A recent report](#) from the National Low Income Housing Coalition found only 42 rental units are affordable and available for every 100 extremely low-income tenant households in Ohio.

The number of homeless veterans has decreased steadily in Ohio since Congress prioritized funding for veteran homelessness several years ago. However, this progress is at risk as policymakers consider proposals to cut federal funding for homeless and affordable housing services.

“Congress did the right thing by approving more funding for rental assistance, homeless grants, public housing and other effective HUD programs in the 2018 budget,” Faith said. “We need Ohio’s congressional leaders to take the next step to closing the affordable housing gap by adequately funding these programs in the 2019 budget.”

During each day of the National Housing Week of Action, from May 1-8, COHHIO will post brief videos on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) highlighting the importance of affordable housing to health, the economy, people with disabilities and seniors, and education.