



# BREAKING GROUND

News from The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

Spring 2018

Nearly 60,000 Ohioans experienced homelessness in 2016. Almost one-third of them were children. Nearly 10,000 were victims of domestic abuse. The data source is understood to be an undercount and these numbers don't even include Ohio's third and eighth largest counties.

We now have these grim figures thanks to [a new report](#) from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency that reveals a more comprehensive view of the severity of homelessness in our state.



Now that we have a better handle on the scope of the problem, the question is: will our political leaders finally prioritize doing something about it? Or have we just become complacent about the fact that tens of thousands of our neighbors struggle with homelessness year in and year out?

The fact is, we know how to solve this problem. Local agencies throughout the state have adopted effective strategies that have successfully reduced homelessness. And when these efforts are adequately funded, we can functionally eliminate homelessness in Ohio.

Unfortunately, our elected officials have spent many years giving away tax breaks to people who don't need them, instead of investing public funds into ending homelessness and housing insecurity. And so Ohio's "silent crisis" continues to fester.

Now that the primary election is behind us and we've fully entered the political season, it's time for politicians to start paying attention to serious problems such as homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in our state. We need leaders who will stand up for people who are struggling

with next to nothing.

One way we can push for improved public policy toward low-income people is for low-income people to engage more actively in the elections process. To that end, COHHIO is ramping up our Ohio Votes program to encourage more low-income Ohioans to get registered and vote in November.

You can read more about Ohio Votes below, along with our take on Issue 1 – the amendment to reform gerrymandering – and updates on federal housing advocacy efforts, our conference, and the other work we've been doing here at COHHIO in recent months.

Keep the faith,

Bill Faith  
Executive Director

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## National Housing Week of Action and the Next HUD Budget

The U.S. House panel that oversees funding for HUD programs is on track to maintain increased funding for housing and community development programs, but the bill has some issues and we all need to keep advocating for Congress to do the right thing.



The House Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Subcommittee's draft Fiscal Year 2019 spending bill would maintain the 10 percent increase in HUD funding that Congress approved for FY 2018 earlier this spring. Moreover, it rejects the administration's plan to jack up rents, impose vindictive work requirements, and

unworkable time limits.

The THUD Subcommittee's draft comes shortly after the **National Housing Week of Action**, a nationwide effort to focus attention on the affordable housing shortage. COHHIO kicked off the Week of Action on May 1 by [delivering a joint letter](#) on behalf of more than 250 organizations to the Ohio's Congressional delegation calling for increased funding for homeless grants, rental assistance, public housing and other critical HUD programs.

[Click here to read more](#) about the Week of Action and the next HUD budget.

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## **'Voterize' Your Community!**

Every day hundreds of homeless and housing agencies across the state work directly with low-income people whose opinions, needs and struggles are largely ignored by our political leaders. And many low-income people largely ignore our political leaders, who are making decisions that directly affect their ability to have a decent, affordable place to live.

During the 2014 mid-term election, only 24 percent of Americans earning less than \$20,000 a year voted. Compare that to a 53 percent voter turnout rate among people earning over \$100,000 a year.

The fact is, politicians pay attention to communities that vote. If we want elected officials to address issues of poverty, homelessness and housing instability then we need to "voterize" the hundreds of thousands of Ohioans affected by these issues. [Click here to learn more](#) about how Ohio Votes can help you voterize your community.

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## **Thanks for helping to make *Housing Ohio 2018* a success!**

With 588 attendees, 38 sessions, 106 presenters, and 59 sponsors and supporters, *Housing Ohio 2018* was COHHIO's biggest conference ever!

Megan Gibbard Kline, director of [A Way Home America](#), kicked off this year's conference on Monday, April 9 with a presentation on how communities in Ohio and across the nation are working to end youth homelessness. We maintained the focus on youth homelessness during the Tuesday morning plenary with powerful testimony from members of the Lighthouse Youth Advisory Council – young people who recounted their personal struggles with housing insecurity and the challenges of navigating a system designed for adults.

During Tuesday's lunch plenary session, Darlene Sweeney-Newbern commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Congress's passage of the federal Fair Housing Act. The Commons in Harmony wrapped up Tuesday's plenary with a rousing set that inspired the audience.

[Click here to learn more](#) about the *Housing Ohio 2018* conference and find materials from our presenters.

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## **Ohioans Vote for Fairer Elections**

Good news! State Issue 1 easily passed in May's primary election, meaning Ohio will actually have a fairer process the next time we redraw the state's congressional districts.

Every 10 years following the census count, state lawmakers are required to revise the U.S. Congressional district map to account for population changes. The current process is heavily biased in favor of the party that holds the majority in the Statehouse.

Thanks to Issue 1, Ohio voters paved a way to create more competitive districts and fairer

elections. Instead of the raw political brawl that always played out in the past, the new process of map-drawing involves a multi-phase approach that requires buy-in from both parties. [Click here to learn more about Issue 1.](#)

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### **National Housing Trust Fund Allocates \$7 Million to Ohio**

HUD recently announced a new round of National Housing Trust Fund allocations totaling \$266.8 million, which includes nearly \$7 million for Ohio to address housing needs for very low and extremely low income people.

While it falls far short of the state's pressing ELI housing needs, the total Fiscal Year 2018 allocation from the NHTF represents a 22 percent increase over FY 2017 and a 45 percent boost over FY 2016, when the program first started appropriating funding to states. In the past two years, NHTF funding to Ohio has nearly doubled from the \$3.7 million the state received in FY 2016. [Click here to learn more about the NHTF.](#)

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### **SOAR is Still Soaring!**

Since 2016 there has been talk buzzing around that SOAR Ohio would be ending. As the SOAR Ohio State Lead with COHHIO, please let me announce for clarification, that has never been the case for our SOAR Ohio Project.

For over 10 years COHHIO has been funding agencies to do the much needed and important work with SOAR that connects Ohioans experiencing homelessness with disabilities to the SSI/SSDI benefits they need to gain stability and independence. Budget cuts, policy changes, and funding sources drying up have threatened our ability to continue funding dedicated SOAR specialists at local agencies into the future.

However, COHHIO has no intention of ending the SOAR Ohio Project or ceasing to provide the training and technical support necessary to continue developing new partnerships and supporting the many SOAR specialists around the state. [Click here to learn more](#) about new funding for SOAR Ohio.

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### **Housing Information Line Helps Tenant Recover Security Deposit**

When Matthew Adair moved out of his Columbus apartment in July of 2017, he received only \$250 out of the \$1,200 security deposit he had originally paid. Matthew was confident that this wasn't right as he had not caused any damage to his apartment while living there. So he began researching his rights as a tenant to find out how to get the rest of his security deposit back.

Matthew went [the Legal Aid Society of Columbus](#) website where he found this helpful [brochure](#) on how to get a security deposit back. While this guide confirmed that he was entitled to his full security deposit, and laid out the mechanics for getting it back, Matthew felt like he needed help

navigating the process of interfacing with his landlord, so he called COHHIO's free [Housing Information Line](#) (888-485-7999). [Click here to read Matthew's story.](#)

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### **COHHIO Hires Ohio Votes Coordinator, Legal Interns**

COHHIO is pleased to announce the hiring of Maria Bruno to coordinate the Ohio Votes program for the 2018 election and welcomes Michelle Brunson and Hayley Kick, our interns for the affordable and fair housing department. [Click here to read more](#) about Maria, Michelle and Hayley.

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### **Ohio BRIDGES**

In February 2018 Ohio became the 28th state to extend foster care. However, different from child welfare, Ohio BRIDGES is a completely voluntary program designed to promote permanency and self-sufficiency. BRIDGES extends funds for housing and case management for eligible young adults who emancipate out of custody between the ages of 18 and 20 years old. [Click here to learn more](#) about the BRIDGES program.

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### **BoSCoC To Launch Coordinated Entry Toolkit**

Since Coordinated Entry (CE) was implemented in January 2018, the Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care has continued to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to providers. In addition to ongoing training, BoSCoC is pleased to announce the release date of the Coordinated Entry Toolkit. [Click here to learn more.](#)

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### **In Other Developments**

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency just announced the 2018 Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) awards totaling more than \$28 million for construction, acquisition and rehabilitation of 2,122 units serving low-income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities.

The 37 developments that received LIHTC funding were selected from among 73 applicants seeking more than \$60 million in credits. OHFA noted that 15 of the funded projects are located in high-opportunity neighborhoods, and ten more are in economically growing communities. [Click here to learn more.](#)

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## Upcoming Events

The Ohio Balance of State Continuum of Care team is offering a series of in-person training sessions around the state on diversion standards and best practices. The next training will be in Licking County on Wednesday May 24. You can sign up for the training [here](#).

These and other upcoming training opportunities on the [COHHIO Calendar](#) include:

- BoSCoC Regional Diversion Training- May 24- Sign up [here](#)
- Survey Says- June 19 – Sign up [here](#)
- Infant Mortality Webinar- July TBA- Please check COHHIO Calendar and list serve for final date
- Understanding Recovery Housing Webinar- TBA- Please check COHHIO Calendar and list serve for final date

[Click here to find out more](#) about other trainings and events from our partners, including Nonprofit VOTE, Community Shelter Board, and the Center for Community Solutions.

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*For more information about COHHIO, visit [our website](#) and check out our [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter feed](#). To support COHHIO's ongoing efforts to end homelessness in Ohio, [become a member](#) and get a discount on our April conference!*

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Sent via [ActionNetwork.org](#). To update your email address, change your name or address, or to stop receiving emails from COHHIO Advocates, please [click here](#).