



# BREAKING GROUND

News from The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

August 2018

Labor Day is approaching, which means campaign season is just around the corner. That thought might give you a sense of nausea, but the upcoming campaign season is a great opportunity to promote the message of ending homelessness and fighting housing insecurity.

The media has been talking more and more about the growing shortage of affordable housing, but we're still not hearing much about it from the candidates. Newspapers throughout Ohio covered [our report](#) showing that only two out of the 10 most common jobs actually pay employees enough to cover the rent. And a recent [state-issued study](#) provided further evidence that more and more renters can't afford housing and wind up getting evicted.



After many years of rising rents and wage stagnation, these problems have spread well beyond those living in poverty. Nearly half of all renter household in Ohio are spending more than they can afford on housing, including 400,000 families who spend over half their income on rent. But we still don't hear politicians saying much about these issues, even though this housing crisis creates huge economic barriers for our state, regardless of who wins in November.

We're not waiting for the candidates to offer solutions. We've drafted a plan for the next governor to fight housing insecurity in Ohio by: expanding the Ohio Housing Trust Fund, developing new models of rental assistance, investing in rapid rehousing to fight homelessness, reducing evictions that cause deeper poverty, and increasing affordable housing production and preservation. At the federal level we need courageous leaders willing to push for expanded housing opportunities, fight the administration's continuing proposals to obliterate HUD's budget, and gut fair housing protections.

We've been working in recent months to get the candidates more informed. For example, last month we sponsored the [Ohio Candidate Forum](#) on Disabilities Issues to question candidates

running for governor and U.S. Senate about housing issues. We coordinated an event in Lake County for Congressman David Joyce to learn how supportive housing helps people recover from homelessness, mental illness and addiction. And earlier this month we co-hosted a housing [tour for U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur](#) in Cleveland, where she visited elderly constituents who described how rental assistance keeps them healthy, independent and stably housed.

When elected officials like Reps. Joyce and Kaptur see for themselves how affordable housing improves the lives of their most vulnerable constituents, they are willing to stand up for these programs. However, some politicians would rather punish poor people for their plight.

For example, Hamilton County Prosecutor Joe Deters has [been in the news](#) a lot lately for his absurd efforts to ban all homeless camps throughout the entire county. Deters wins the Grinch Award for the cruelest over-reaction we've seen in Ohio, possibly ever.

Deters' countywide homeless ban isn't just heartless. It's a stupid waste of public resources. Efforts to criminalize homeless people aren't new, but they are especially galling given the evidence that permanent housing solutions aren't just more humane than jails and shelters – they're often more cost-effective in the long run. And without more affordable housing, we'll continue dealing with homelessness and all its negative impacts on healthcare, education, child welfare, the justice system and the economy.

That's the message that the politicians need to hear now, before they get elected to lead the state next year. We're talking about it, but candidates really need to hear from you that housing insecurity is a major issue for our state. Everyone who cares about affordable housing has a responsibility to voice their concerns. We need you to speak up at campaign events and community forums, call and email their offices, tell pollsters you're concerned about affordable housing, write about it in letters to the editor. *(We're going to launch the first ever advocacy contest and we'll donate cash to the winners' favorite nonprofits! Keep an eye out for that announcement soon!)*

Ultimately, voting is the most powerful way to put our issues on their agenda. If more people in poor communities vote, politicians will pay more attention to poor communities and enact better policies to lift people out of poverty. That's why we've expanded our [Ohio Votes initiative](#) and redoubled our efforts to register voters in affordable housing projects, food pantries, community centers and other nonprofits throughout the state that serve hundreds of thousands of low-income Ohioans every day.

You can read more about our advocacy, the Ohio Votes initiative, and other COHHIO news by clicking on the links below. And if you'd like to join our efforts to mobilize low-income voters, contact our Ohio Votes Coordinator [Maria Bruno](#). If you want to find out more about hosting an event for your elected officials, contact our Advocacy Director [Gina Wilt](#). If you want to become a member and support COHHIO, contact our Communications/Development Director [Marcus Roth](#).

As always, thanks for supporting our efforts to end homelessness in Ohio,

Bill Faith  
Executive Director

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## **Congresswoman Kaptur Tours Westerly Apartments**

Over the many years we've been advocating for affordable housing, we've found that the most effective strategy to build support among our elected officials is to introduce them to the people whose lives are improved by the programs that ensure they have a safe, decent stable home. Simply put - seeing is believing.

These housing tours are a key part of our efforts to build support among Ohio's Congressional Delegation for HUD programs that help house formerly homeless veterans, low-income seniors, Ohioans with disabilities, and others who are struggling to keep a roof over their heads. So we were thrilled to join Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur for a tour of the Westerly Apartments in Lakewood and participate in a roundtable discussion about how housing stability is so crucial for people's health and wellbeing.

Rep. Kaptur actually doesn't need much convincing. She has long been a champion of affordable housing during her tenure in Congress (she recently became the longest-serving woman ever in the U.S. House!) And she has been a critical vote as a member of the House Appropriations Committee, which oversees funding for HUD programs that provide rental assistance, public housing and homeless services. [Click here for a full report.](#)

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## **Ohio Votes Registering Voters**

The deadline to register voters (Oct. 9) for the fall election is less than 50 days away! Close elections, like the recent race for Ohio's 12th Congressional District, show us that every vote counts.

If you want your community to have more say in policies that affect affordable housing and homelessness, join more than 60 nonprofit agencies who have contacted our Ohio Votes initiative for help registering and turning out more low-income voters in Ohio. [Click here](#) to read more, or join Ohio Votes Coordinator [Maria Bruno](#) at an upcoming Meet-and-Greet or training session in a city near you.

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## **Ohio Jobs Don't Pay Enough to Make Rent**

Only two of the top 10 occupations in Ohio actually pay their employees enough to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment, according to [a recent report](#).

Ohio's housing wage increased again this year to \$15.25 – the hourly amount renters need to earn to afford the rent for a basic, two-bedroom unit, according to a report jointly released Thursday by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Coalition on Homelessness

and Housing in Ohio. Of the 10 occupations in Ohio with the most employees only registered nurses and customer service representatives earn more than the two-bedroom housing wage.

[Another recent report](#) from the Ohio Housing Finance Agency found that nearly 730,000 Ohio renter households can't afford the rent.

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## **COHHIO Launches Diversion, Online Education, Homelessness Map**

It's only been one month since Ohio's 80 rural county homeless system implemented its Diversion process, but local agencies in the Balance of State Continuum of Care have already seen considerable success in helping people avoid homelessness. [Click here](#) to read how providers around the BoSCoC have already diverted 10 percent of households experiencing a housing crisis from emergency shelter to a more permanent solution.

The world of homeless services is full of many different terms and acronyms that providers must be familiar with in order to stay on top of best practices and HUD-mandated standards. Luckily, the BoSCoC team at COHHIO is working on [a new online resource](#) to ease the process of learning all this information for people who are new to the field.

COHHIO's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) team recently created a new tool that helps visualize the severity of homelessness throughout Ohio's 88 counties. For the first time ever, aggregate data from the 2018 Point in Time (PIT) count for every county in the state has been gathered into one source, an online [interactive Tableau Map](#).

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## **Housing Info Line Throws Lifeline**

Sonia Johnson was on the verge of becoming homeless when she reached out to COHHIO via the Housing Information email system. [Click here](#) to read about how the Housing Info Line helped Sonia keep her home when her local MHA wrongly sought to revoke her voucher.

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## **In Other Developments**

Columbus recently upped its commitment to preserving and developing affordable housing in the city's South Side, bringing the investment among the city, Community Development for All People, Nationwide Children's Hospital, and the Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing to \$25 million. The partnership is working to build and renovate 170 units of affordable housing before gentrification pushes long-time residents out of the area.

[Click here](#) to read about his and other recent affordable housing developments in Ohio.

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## Upcoming Training Opportunities

COHHIO has several upcoming training opportunities for housing and homelessness professionals including:

- Aug. 29 & 30 - Financial Management for Non-Profit Organizations (Akron and Dayton) Register [Register Here](#)
- Aug. 29 - The Impact of Opioids on Youth and How Trauma-Informed Care Promotes Resiliency (Columbus) Register [Register Here](#)
- Oct. 16 - Protecting the Survivor: Providers' Guide to Helping Survivors of Domestic Violence
- Oct. 24 - Understanding Addiction 101
- Housing First and Harm Reduction (Akron), Date TBD
- Best Practices in Case Management (webinar), Date TBD

We've also been working with Ohio Mental Health and Addiction Services to plan the Second Annual [OhioMHAS Housing University](#) on Oct. 1 -2 in at the Marriott Columbus University Area.

[Click here](#) to find out more about other trainings and events from our partners, including the Ohio CDC Association's [Building Community Together](#) Oct. 3-5 and Council for Rural Housing & Development of Ohio is holding its 2018 Ohio [Rural Housing Conference](#) on Sept. 10-12 at Embassy Suites in Columbus.

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### August Workers' Comp Update

COHHIO partners with CareWorksComp to offer our organizational members the opportunity to dramatically cut workers' compensation costs through our group rating programs. During the most recent policy year, COHHIO member agencies saved a combined total of \$244,866 for 2018, with an average savings of \$6,121! [Click here](#) for more information.

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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!*