



BREAKING GROUND

News from The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio

August 2019

Four years ago we managed to beat back a serious effort to gut the Ohio Housing Trust Fund in the state budget. This summer we celebrated a modest, but important, [increase for the OHTF in the budget bill](#) that passed last month.

While it's not as much as we had hoped, the Senate's amendment will generate approximately \$3.5 million more every year for local homeless and affordable housing programs throughout Ohio. That's an increase of eight to nine percent over the current fiscal year. It's less than the \$20 million we advocated for, but it's the first increase in 16 years and it's a promising step in the right direction.

Another sign that policymakers are starting to pay more attention to housing issues is a \$5 million GRF appropriation to beef up housing efforts targeting homeless youth and pregnant women. The amendment was added to the bill at the very end of the budget process at the request of the DeWine Administration after learning about increasing rates of children and pregnant mothers in the homeless system.



Taken together, these two amendments suggest that our message is starting to resonate. And we're working to keep the momentum going. Earlier this month we coordinated a [roundtable discussion on housing insecurity](#) at the Menwa Senior Apartments in Wadsworth. Senate President Larry Obhof (R-Medina), who joined us at the event along with Reps. Darrell Kick (R-Loudenville) and Steve Hambly (R-Brunswick), was a key ally in the Housing Trust Fund expansion. We also joined the YMCA of Central Ohio to show Sen. Stephanie Kunze (R-Hilliard) and Rep. Mary Lightbody (D-Westerville) firsthand how supportive housing at Franklin Station helps stabilize some of their most vulnerable constituents. We also helped coordinate [housing events in Findlay](#), Toledo and [Columbus](#) in recent months.

We're also meeting with DeWine administration officials to ensure that the new funding for youth homelessness gets spent wisely. And we're still encouraging the administration to do more to reverse rising homelessness among children by investing a portion of Ohio's federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families funding on rapid rehousing.

Meanwhile, there have been some promising developments on [the federal budget](#) for housing and homeless programs over the summer, but nothing has been finalized yet. We're also encouraged by forthcoming legislation to reduce the negative impact of eviction on low-income tenants. On the downside, we continue fighting backward and self-defeating rules at HUD. Congress is still in recess, so now is a great time to weigh in on these important issues with your senators and representatives.

On that note, I want to personally thank everyone who picked up the phone or sent an email to their elected officials over the past several months. I bug politicians all the time, but when they hear from several constituents asking them to do something specific about housing insecurity in their own districts, it sometimes makes all the difference.

Click on the headlines below to read more details about these topics and other things we've been working on over the summer.

Thanks for helping house Ohio,

Bill Faith
Executive Director

Federal Advocacy Update

The recent budget deal between Congressional leaders and President Trump is a promising sign, but there's still some uncertainty about how federal homeless and housing programs will fare once the final bill is passed.

The budget bill the U.S. House passed in July would lift federal spending caps on defense and domestic programs by \$321 billion over the next two fiscal years. The House's [Fiscal Year 2020 spending bill](#) would increase funding for rental assistance, public housing and homeless programs and rejects the administration's self-defeating policy proposals, like work requirements and time limits on housing assistance.

Housing Trust Fund Tour

When it comes to affordable housing, seeing is believing. We recently proved this again at two events in Medina County and Columbus, where state elected officials could see for themselves how the housing programs they fund make a real, positive impact on the lives of their constituents.

The Franklin Station roundtable and Menwa tour are just two of the many events COHHIO helps coordinate with local agencies and elected officials to highlight effective solutions to homelessness and housing insecurity. If you are interested in hosting an event at your agency, please contact COHHIO [Advocacy Director Gina Wilt](#).

Out of Reach

Every year we team up with the National Low Income Housing Coalition to release the Out of Reach report, which determines the Housing Wage - how much people actually need to earn to afford an apartment in every county of Ohio and the U.S. This has been a great tool to illustrate the growing gap between increasing rents and stagnant wages. The message really started sinking in

when we added data about how much Ohio's most common jobs actually pay - *only 3 out of the top 10 actually pay the rent!*

[Homeless & Housing Services Resource Guide](#)

People facing a crisis and those trying to help someone escape homelessness often struggle to find the right person to contact in their community, with hundreds of agencies scattered throughout the state.

Now it's gotten easier to find the right contact anywhere in the state. COHHIO's new [Resource Guide](#) is a new online map that lists Coordinated Entry access points for homeless services throughout Ohio.

[Ohio Votes August Update](#)

The November 2019 General Election is right around the corner. While most attention is already on the 2020 Presidential Election, we are focusing on this year's election by showing voters that local elections really matter to them. But we need your help! Join COHHIO's Ohio Votes program as we build on our new tradition of The People's Power Party on National Voter Registration Day on Sept. 24.

[COHHIO Creates Domestic Violence Workgroup](#)

Despite the many connections between domestic violence and homelessness, historically DV and homeless service providers have not always worked well together. Amanda Wilson, from COHHIO's HMIS team, is working to improve coordination between victims service providers (VSPs) and homeless services agencies in the state of Ohio.

[Housing Information Line Investigates Nonexistent Voucher Rule](#)

Diana faced an impossible choice. Her property manager told her that a new rule only allowed her to use her Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) at a unit with a higher rent level or remain in her current apartment set at the lowest rent level—but she could no longer use both. She reached out to COHHIO's Housing Information Line for help.

[August Training Bulletin](#)

COHHIO staff attended and presented at the National Alliance to End Homelessness's 2019 in Washington D.C. last month, and are excited to bring some great information back to Ohio and

continue working towards ending homelessness in our state. Check out upcoming training opportunities hosted by COHHIO and other organizations. And don't miss the [Ohio CDC Association's annual conference](#) Oct. 10-11 in Canton!

[In Other Developments](#)

Several new projects that make home a reality for low-income Ohioans and people experiencing homelessness are underway in Ohio. Here are a few innovative examples that got underway in the past few months...

[Kroger is Hiring at Your Agency](#)

Kroger recently launched a new recruitment effort, reaching out to agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness, those with disabilities and other employment challenges

[September is Membership Month at COHHIO!](#)

COHHIO members drive our advocacy to end homelessness in Ohio and support all of our programs to help low-income people facing crisis. To celebrate our members, we're offering a special deal during the month of September: new members will get a bonus three months added to their annual membership! And existing members who refer a new member will also get the same bonus! We'll also highlight the good work our members do in their community on our social media platforms.

So help us celebrate Membership Month by joining COHHIO now or asking someone you know to become a new member! This offer is available to organizational and individual members. Visit [our membership page](#) for more information about becoming a COHHIO member or contact [Manuel Quintero](#).

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!