



Thursday, July 15, 2021

Article 7

Report Finds Pandemic Exacerbated Housing Affordability Issues

A surge in home prices is driving up rents, which remain unaffordable for many Ohioans, according to a new report.

The annual **Out of Reach Report** by the National Low Income Housing Coalition and the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio found a person working a 40-hour week all year would need to make \$16.64 per hour to afford rent and utilities for a two-bedroom apartment.

The average wage of a renter is just \$14.84, the report said.

The hourly pay needed to afford housing is higher in some areas. In Union County it's \$20.79 an hour; in the Columbus area it's \$19.83, and it's \$17.62 in the Cincinnati area, the report noted.

Last year, the report found a renter needed to make \$15.99 an hour statewide. In 2019, the figure was \$15.73 an hour. (See **Gongwer Ohio Report, July 14, 2020**)

COHHIO Executive Director Bill Faith said in a statement that the pandemic has made the situation worse.

"The spike in home prices is driving the cost of rents higher in many areas, making the affordable housing shortage even worse for people who were already struggling to pay rent," he said.

COHHIO also pointed to the median wages for the 10 most common jobs in the state, saying only one – registered nurses – made more than \$16.64 an hour. Fast food workers, the most common occupation, make only \$9.79 an hour. The next most common job, retail sales, were just under \$12 an hour.

The group said federal relief steps such as emergency rental assistance and the eviction moratorium from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were designed to prevent an eviction crisis, but

Mr. Faith said policymakers should do more to address the long-term shortage of affordable housing.

"After a year of job losses, furloughs, and reduced hours, many struggling Ohio workers are on the brink of losing their homes when the eviction moratorium ends July 31," he said. "We need to start thinking long term so we're not caught flat-footed again when the next crisis hits."

NLIHC President and CEO Diane Yentel also called for more aggressive steps to promote affordable housing. The groups urged Congress to expand access to the Housing Choice Voucher Program, put \$70 billion toward rehabbing public housing and use \$45 million for the National Housing Trust Fund.

"Housing is a basic human need and should be regarded an unconditional human right," she said. "The enduring problem of housing unaffordability ultimately calls for bold investments in housing programs that will ensure stability in the future. Without a significant federal intervention, housing will continue to be out of reach. This leaves millions susceptible to the overwhelming consequences of Congressional inaction."

Copyright 2021 Gongwer News Service, Inc. All Rights Reserved | [Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)