

Wednesday, September 7, 2022

Housing Group Seeks Funds For Second Study

Housing advocates are seeking an additional \$9 million to expand a pilot program that has shown a positive connection between housing security and infant and maternal health.

Launched in 2018, [Healthy Beginnings at Home](#) studied 100 families and found those that received interventions had higher rates of babies born at full-term and at a healthy birth weight and spent less time in a neonatal intensive care unit. ([Executive Summary](#))

Those who received housing supports also saw significant Medicaid savings (\$4,175 per claim) compared to those who did not (\$21,521), Amy Riegel, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio, told the [Infant Mortality Commission](#) Wednesday.

"Research showed this was a pilot that had all the makings of taking it to the next level for replication and scale," Ms. Riegel said.

COHHIO, which is leading the program, has secured [\\$2.25 million](#) from the Department of Health to replicate the pilot program with 30 households in Akron and 60 in Columbus.

"The funding is greatly appreciated and was championed by many leaders here in the caucus and at the governor's office," Ms. Riegel said. "This gets us started, but an additional \$9 million is needed to take it to scale and get enough participants needed to show statistical significance."

The \$9 million would allow the program to reach 210 additional households in Akron, Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton for a second cohort and bring the total to 300.

COHHIO has proposed the money come from the state's remaining American Rescue Plan Act funds.

The organization, along with the National Low Income Housing Coalition, has been calling on state leaders to invest \$308 million in ARPA funds to address the housing shortage. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, August 1, 2022](#))

Commission Co-Chair [Sen. Stephanie Kunze](#) (R-Hilliard) questioned why Cleveland was not participating.

Barbara Poppe, whose firm is serving as the lead consultant, said Cleveland took part in a program to prepare cities to replicate HBAH but "made the decision that they had other priorities and didn't have the bandwidth."

"This is a very intensive intervention, and a community has to bring local government and philanthropic dollars and a very committed leadership," Ms. Poppe said.

The interventions include 15 months of rental subsidies, followed by a nine-month "step down period" leading to the participant paying full rent, Douglas Argue of COHHIO said. Some participants may continue to receive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development or other subsidies.

Additionally, participants can receive guidance on how to negotiate with landlords, financial literacy and career development. These educational aspects of the program are voluntary.

Health Policy Institute of Ohio, the lead researcher, will track the households throughout the program and for three years after the birth to track long-term health and Medicaid spending.

"The intervention group reduces Medicaid spending because babies are healthier and more on track to succeed," Ms. Riegel said. "That's the path we want to put children on."

"What we know is once we can pull all this research together and look at outcomes, it will help us lead conversations on how we can change public policy and really improve that intersection of health and housing," she said. "This is a unique time for us to show what we can bring forward to shape the lives of women and children."

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