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Veto Sought For Restriction On Rental Assistance Funds

Housing advocates want [Gov. Mike DeWine](#) to use his pen to excise a limitation on rent and utility aid included in a massive spending bill finalized in the final hours of the legislative year.

The Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio [wrote](#) to the governor that while it appreciated the inclusion of \$161 million in federal Emergency Rent and Utility Assistance dollars in the package ([HB 45](#)), it takes issue with a requirement that the funding go toward rent and utility arrearages incurred prior to Dec. 31, 2021.

COHHIO Executive Director Amy Riegel wrote that the limitation "renders these funds practically unusable."

"Local Community Action Agencies report there are no remaining applications from households with rental arrears incurred prior to Dec. 31, 2021," she wrote. "These tenants have already moved out or have been evicted."

Ms. Riegel argued that the language would prevent legitimate applications for the funding from being filed while giving criminals "an opportunity to devise fraudulent applications to attempt to access these funds."

COHHIO predicted the likeliest end result of the language, if it becomes law, would be the federal government reclaiming dollars that go unused and redirecting them to other states.

The \$161 million for rental assistance was just a fraction of the \$6 billion in mostly federal coronavirus relief dollars added to HB45 before it cleared the legislature in the waning hours of the lame duck session. (See [Gongwer Ohio Report, December 13, 2022](#))

Finance Chair [Sen. Matt Dolan](#) (R-Chagrin Falls) and a caucus spokesman could not be reached for comment prior to publishing time regarding the language, which was backed by Senate Republicans.

COHHIO also has raised concerns that another change in HB45 to revise the method to assess the value of affordable housing developments would increase property tax liability for senior and workforce housing developments.

The language, the group said, resembles a provision backed by Senate [President Matt Huffman](#) (R-Lima) previously included but ultimately removed from the last budget ([HB 110](#)) following stakeholder feedback.

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