

Derek Alvarado for State Representative District 74: COHHIO Responses

Question 1:

There are a good many things that Ohio can do to help end homelessness. Times are tough everywhere. The idea of picking yourself up by your bootstraps is finally being looked at as an impossible task. Instead, we must employ ways of approaching housing insecurity with new perspectives while removing stigma about how to get this job done.

I propose that there needs to be a variety of realistic strategies put in place to disrupt this situation. I do not have all the answers, but I do have ideas to address the issue. One way to address the issue is through providing citizens with Universal Basic Income (UBI) and Universal Health Care (UHC) for starters. Please visit the following websites to examine the attempts to make these ideas a reality in Ohio <https://uhcanohio.org/>, and <https://ubemployment.org>. When families and individuals have access to financial support, they will use those supports to take care of their needs and work on bettering their situation. This has been shown to be the case most recently in San Antonio Texas <https://www.businessinsider.com/san-antonio-ubi-guaranteed-basic-income-housing-finance-austin-rent-2024-3>

To ensure these supports are put in place, I propose that we continue to fund COHHIO and further identify how to best support the population currently experiencing housing insecurity. The continued research of implemented solutions that other municipalities (local, domestic, or foreign) have used to remedy their issues related to homelessness must occur. Of course, those best practices may not exactly fit our demographic needs here in Ohio. However, by observing other communities' solutions and how they arrived at them, we can identify what is possible to address our needs in Ohio. We can use the information to perform a causal analysis that drills down deeper to identify what our particular situation is here and then strive to see what solutions would best match our demographic needs.

There is more than likely going to be issues identified by these analyses that overlap the various populations affected here in Ohio- whether they are urban, exurban, suburban or rural residents. Those identified overlaps can be where the remediation efforts begin. The needs that are determined to be outliers through the process can be placed on a continuum of support.

Over the years, as a teacher I've worked with many families where housing instability has affected their student's education. I've come to learn that these folks need a full spectrum of services to reestablish themselves in their communities once affected by this issue. So many people in the situation we speak of are dealing with depression and then the

secondary and tertiary issues that arise when dealing with instability in general. The loss of jobs, drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence can be compounded when dealing with home insecurity. We as community members of Ohio need to ensure that there are opportunities for families in these situations to receive counseling of different types, everything from psychological, and medical services to job/ career related services and training to help them gain their footing once again.

Another issue that needs to be addressed in regard to housing insecurity is that when there are many members of a community that are experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness the tax base in the area often decreases. This is an issue especially on regard to school funding in Ohio. Ohio's public school's educational funding has been deemed unconstitutional for over 30 years now. As it currently sits, funding schools is based on property taxes which is often correlated to educational attainment levels of residents. When affordable housing is built in Ohio a plan must be put in place to ensure that the value of the houses can rise and they can be eventually purchased by the people that live in them. We need to ensure that these are the folks that get 15 year tax abatements, not the folks buying expensive, newly built homes. Ideally, cities and states would ensure that the house's taxes that would be assessed (under abatement) are included in the funding equation of the local school district. Until school funding is changed we need to ensure that schools help boost the ability of citizens to receive an education that will help them to steer themselves out of a repetitive cycle that includes home insecurity.

Question 2:

Addressing the housing needs of our rural population follows suit to what I speak of in Question 1. We need to identify if the perceived barriers affecting our rural residents need to be strategized differently than what we do in other parts of the state. We also need to examine if there is a need to remedy the issues identified in other ways that differ from other parts of the state.

One of the major issues that I see in rural parts of Ohio is that there is little industry in comparison to what is available in the cities. Many of the small towns peppering the rural parts of the state are languishing in regards to having commerce and job growth. These small towns need new breath blown into them perhaps via small business incentives, grants, or other identified strategies that reflect the needs of the population. Perhaps we need investment zones throughout the state whereas incentives are made to move jobs into those rural towns. One way to do this is to offer housing incentives to younger people and families that are starting out and have certain skill sets...teachers, drivers, line workers

in manufacturing. Perhaps building low income housing in rural towns can be a solution to house those workers.

A method to create remedies for those experiencing housing insecurity can be that Ohio invests in rural jobs that address transportation deficits in rural Ohio as part of revitalizing small towns. By making some of the small towns that are languishing into transportation hubs we can begin to find purposeful regenerating economies. One strategy would be to encourage the location of transportation hubs in zones where towns are incentivizing industries to relocate to. This can also be a place where there is low income housing. Placing these services in one place would be a twofold benefit. We can have new jobs for residents whether as drivers or folks working in new industries in the town, and it would help people resolve transportation issues.

Our state funds its PreK-12 education system based largely on property taxes and if the community is poor, the kids get substandard access to education- feeding a vicious cycle. By creating these investment zones the tax base would rise and therefore the schools will be better able to serve students so that they can be better suited to avoid housing insecurity in their futures.

We can do more for our citizens in Ohio!

Derek Alvarado