

Questions for state candidates

Homelessness: The fact that nearly 11,000 Ohioans are experiencing homelessness on any given night is a stark reminder of the urgency with which we need to address this issue. As a state, we must adopt a comprehensive approach that focuses on prevention, rapid rehousing, and permanent supportive housing. We should prioritize funding for programs that keep people from becoming homeless in the first place, such as rental assistance and eviction prevention. Additionally, expanding access to mental health and substance abuse services is crucial, as these are often underlying factors contributing to homelessness. Collaboration between state, local governments, and non-profits is essential to ensure that resources are efficiently utilized to provide safe, stable housing for all Ohioans.

Housing Challenges in Rural Ohio: Housing insecurity in rural areas is indeed an often overlooked but significant issue. To address the unique challenges faced by these communities, we need to increase investment in rural infrastructure, including affordable housing development. The state can offer incentives for developers to build affordable housing in rural areas and provide more robust support for community land trusts, which help preserve affordable housing. We should also enhance funding for home repair programs that assist low-income homeowners in maintaining safe and livable homes. Furthermore, expanding access to high-speed internet in rural areas is critical, as it opens up economic opportunities that can help alleviate housing insecurity.

Ohio Housing Trust Fund (OHTF): I absolutely believe that the state should ensure sufficient revenue for the Ohio Housing Trust Fund. The OHTF is a vital resource for developing affordable housing and supporting homelessness prevention programs across the state. To stabilize and potentially increase the funding, I would advocate for adjusting the revenue sources, including revisiting the split with county recorder fees to ensure it keeps pace with inflation and the growing needs of Ohioans. Additionally, exploring other funding mechanisms, such as dedicating a portion of state taxes or creating public-private partnerships, could provide more sustainable and reliable funding streams for the OHTF.

Additional Comments: Reducing homelessness and expanding access to affordable housing in Ohio requires a multifaceted approach that includes not just immediate assistance but also long-term solutions. We must address the root causes, such as income inequality, lack of affordable healthcare, and underfunded public services, all of which contribute to housing instability. By focusing on economic justice, we can ensure that full-time work pays enough to afford housing, and by expanding access to mental health and addiction services, we can help individuals maintain stable housing. Furthermore, I would advocate for stronger tenant protections and more robust enforcement of housing codes to ensure that everyone in Ohio has access to safe and affordable housing.

s/Tristan Rader

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