

## Questions for Federal Candidates:

### 1. Homelessness

On any given night, nearly 11,000 Ohioans are experiencing homelessness—sleeping outside or in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program. What should the federal government do to help end homelessness?

For immediate support, the federal government should provide tax incentives for properties that are still safe structurally, but may not be in use, to be used as temporary shelters during extreme weather scenarios.

Over the long term, the federal government must prioritize housing: temporary and for longer periods, in close proximity to social services. This way, a community can be built where job training and classes for activities such as cooking, home economics and cleaning can be best implemented.

### 2. Housing Challenges in Rural Ohio

Although millions of Ohioans throughout the state have trouble paying their rent or mortgage, housing insecurity in rural areas is often overlooked. Resources for rural communities have decreased while housing issues have increased significantly. How would you address the housing needs of our rural communities?

To begin, I have to say that I have never lived in a rural community and my district does not encompass a rural community. So I am going off what I can infer. While resource needs must be met, I believe rural homelessness to be more of a cultural problem than an economic one.

Direct and consistent communication, not only with the unhoused, but also with the landlords, owners and members of the community, is essential to bridging the gap and allowing for homelessness to be solved. Similarly to urban environments, leasing property to Section 8 voucher holders comes with a negative stigma. By building relationships from the lessor to the leasee while the government focuses on making the process for housing as efficient and painless as possible, we can get closer to ending homelessness.

Again, this is my own speculation. I would enjoy learning more from you and members of your organization and community on what you have found to be best practices. Please contact my email and phone number listed on my website: [freemanforcongress.com](http://freemanforcongress.com)

### 3. Housing as Safety Net

Unlike Social Security and Medicare, federal housing assistance is not guaranteed, even if a family qualifies for the program. Today, fewer than one in four eligible households receive the assistance they need. Are there existing housing programs

that you would want to expand? If so, what specifically will you do to expand access to this assistance?

To begin, the federal government can and must guarantee federal housing assistance to those who qualify.

Once that is passed, programs and services will fall in line more quickly – because it is the law.

I am most aware of the Section 8 housing program, which has been utilized to great effect in my district. Cuyahoga County in Ohio receives some of the most vouchers, and puts around the most to use in the U.S.

From what I have gathered, the program does not need to be expanded to better succeed, it needs to be made more efficient. The pain point I have heard most about in this program is how long background checks take on the residence being leased, and the background checks taken on the leasees. I will continue to look for ways to decrease this time gap where people must remain unhoused and a landlord loses money while waiting for the residence to be filled.

To educate me more on your knowledge of housing programs and what should be done, please reach out to me.

#### 4. Additional Comments

Feel free to include any additional comments you may have about ways the state/federal government can reduce homelessness and/or expand access to affordable housing in Ohio.

You hold many of the answers since you work in this field and gather knowledge every day on what works and what does not work.

My goal, if I am elected to Congress, is to eliminate homelessness. We live in the wealthiest nation in the history of humankind. There is no reason why anyone who does not want to be, should be homeless. My mother has worked in a food pantry since I was in grade school, and while working with her, I have met some people who simply do not want housing. That is their choice, but I know it does not reflect a majority of the people experiencing homelessness. When we can ensure that every individual, every family, has housing, I know so many of our other problems will cease to exist and our taxes will decrease, because we will have covered a basic human necessity.

Ending homelessness must be prioritized and completed.

From my vantage point (again, please offer your insight), I see the strategy as threefold:

- 1.) Creating efficiency in our services and how they are administered
- 2.) Building community amongst the newly housed, as well as with established and housed members of the community
- 3.) Effectively communicating to the public about the barriers unhoused individuals face and the best ways they can help.

In my district, there are over 14,000 non-profit organizations. We have some of the most non-profits per capita compared with other areas of the country. And yet, we are one of the poorest cities in America. There is no shortage of people wanting to help, yet, the help doesn't seem to be administered as effectively as it needs to be. Currently, individuals must travel to different areas of the district to receive necessary services and databases are not shared effectively between service providers. By bringing services to one common place and synchronizing databases so that everyone is on the same page, we can save dollars and headaches, while building a community.

We all thrive in community. That is how we as humans have survived for as long and as well as we have. For no one is creating community more essential than for the unhoused. What many have experienced has eroded their trust in those around them – understandable so. Not only must we provide the necessary service of shelter, but it is essential that we provide the building blocks for creating and maintaining community. We are stronger together, and when people of different economic backgrounds are able to be in community with each other, the community only thrives.

Which leads to the final, and potentially, most crucial aspect for success: educating and communicating effectively with the general public. I am sure you have experiences with people, who despite all their best efforts to help, might miss the point. Or 'help' in a way that becomes detrimental. This will almost certainly be the most challenging aspect of solving homelessness, but it is essential – so that the correct leaders are selected to implement the changes necessary, so that communities are on board with having homeless individuals nearby and in community with them, and so detrimental practices are coached out of people's systems.

We can do this!

We have the resources, we have the will to serve – we must put our efforts together to the most efficient and effective way to achieve what too many people believe to be impossible.

This is not impossible. Anything involving building a stronger community, rooted in love for thy neighbor, is always, and will forever be, possible.