

Affordable Housing

WISDOM and our supporters believe what the Governor believes, “that affordable, quality housing is a critical, and often missing component of economic development that affects the lives and opportunities of many people in our state and (the lack of such housing) has a negative impact on the overall economy”. In addition, we believe that the state affordable housing budget should: 1) prioritize those households earning very low and extremely low income, defined by HUD at or below 50% of the county median income and adjusted for family size, and 2) provide a path for those “locked out of housing” with high rental barriers, primarily eviction and conviction histories. Safe, quality, and affordable housing is at the core of a healthy community.

In 2019, according to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, 42.4 percent of Wisconsin households paid more than 30 percent of their income on rent. The state must develop programs that alleviate the cost burden that many families face in trying to rent or own their own home. Because low and extremely low-income households feel the effects the most, there is increased demand for other government assistance. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition (<https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/wisconsin>), across Wisconsin, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30% of their area median income (AMI). Severely cost burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent, and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions. Moreover, an eviction on your record and/or a criminal conviction history can permanently “lock a person out” of being able to rent. This means that many Wisconsin individuals and families are living in overpriced and often unhealthy and unsafe hotel environments, living with friends or family, in limited shelter space, or, on the street. Frequent moves, the threat of foreclosure and eviction can also have a relationship to stress levels, feelings of hopelessness and depression.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development research indicates that seniors, individuals with disabilities and persons of color are disproportionately affected by multiple housing challenges, including affordability. In rural areas, this can be exacerbated by a lack of neighbors, services, and amenities (<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer17/highlight1.html>).

OUR ASK:

- Transfer \$20 million of the \$50 million GPR Affordable Workforce Housing Grant program at the Department of Administration to the Homelessness Prevention Budget for programs increasing access to affordable housing.
- \$10,000,000 of this funding should be transferred in each of the following years, 2021-22 and 2022-23, for housing equity programs which are guided by impacted people, increasing access to affordable housing for those living with incomes in the low-extremely low range and with high rental barriers, primarily eviction and conviction histories.