



WISCAP APPLAUDS COMMITTEE PASSAGE of the HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH ACT

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) applauds the U.S. House Financial Services Committee's recent passage of the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 1511), bipartisan legislation that would allow communities to effectively utilize federal funding to provide housing and services tailored to the unique needs of each homeless population in accordance with local circumstances. On July 24th, the Committee advanced the bill by a vote of 39-18.

WISCAP is especially appreciative of the prominent role the Wisconsin Congressional delegation has played in the bill's advance. Representative Sean Duffy, Chair of the Housing and Insurance Subcommittee voted in favor of the bill and Representatives Marc Pocan and Gwen Moore are among the earliest co-sponsors of the legislation. Additionally, Senator Tami Baldwin is a co-sponsor of the Senate version (S. 611). WISCAP and the growing list of national, state, and local organizations supporting this legislation urge the full Wisconsin delegation to support the Act.

Nationwide, schools and early childhood programs are showing significant increases in homelessness. During the 2016-17 school year in Wisconsin, 19,264 homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools, of which 77% were staying with others temporarily due to lack of alternatives, and 7% were in motels, when they were identified as homeless. Therefore, 84% of the homeless children and youth in WI schools are not considered homeless under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition.

Currently, most federal child and youth programs, including early childhood programs and public schools, recognize all of the forms of homelessness that children and youth experience. However, HUD does not. Instead, HUD homeless assistance eligibility criteria exclude some of the most vulnerable homeless children and youth from accessing the programs and services that they need. By aligning HUD criteria with other federal programs, it would allow communities to identify those most in need of assistance and ensure that resources are used most efficiently to prevent and end homelessness.

WISCAP sees this legislation as a necessary change. Community action agencies throughout Wisconsin provide a wide range of programs and services that help individuals and families achieve self-sufficiency. Yet, these same agencies are often unable to provide critical housing assistance due to restrictive definitions. According to WISCAP Executive Director Brad Paul, "since 2001, as consecutive administrations have attempted to "end" homelessness for certain populations, family and youth homelessness has reached record levels in many cities. Homelessness in rural and suburban areas has grown, too, but remains largely hidden and often ignored. HCYA would finally acknowledge a more accurate picture of homelessness, enabling local innovation and leveraging of new resources."
