

Wisconsin Opportunity Act Section-by-Section Summary

Statement of Purpose

Findings:

- The Institute for Research on Poverty reports that more than 1 in 10 Wisconsinites live in poverty,
- In 2018, the Department of Public Instruction identified more than 19,000 homeless children and youth throughout the state;
- While unemployment remains low, housing costs have increased out of proportion to income;
- 306,000 low-income Wisconsin renters pay more than half their income for housing;
- 37.5% of Wisconsinites struggle to afford the necessities of housing, child care, health care, food, and transportation, according to the 2018 United Way *ALICE Study of Financial Hardship*.

Therefore, the [**Wisconsin Opportunity Act**] aims to provide the transformational investments that reduce poverty and fundamentally improve people's economic circumstances. This act furthers the goal of addressing barriers to achieving economic stability by providing housing, health, job training, and income supports.

Wisconsin Community Service Block Grant

- Creation of a Wisconsin state supplement CSBG program [25% State Match]

Housing Stability

- An additional \$220,000 for the Critical Assistance Program;
- An additional \$900,000 for the Housing Assistance Program;
- An increase of \$700,000 for the State Shelter Subsidy Grant Program;
- Establishes within WHEDA a pilot program for homeless families with children;
- Directs the Interagency Council on Homelessness to review the state's housing and homelessness-related programs and identify ways to better serve homeless children and youth;
- This bill requires DPI to issue a report to the legislature on the number of homeless children and youth identified in the public-school system;
- The bill requires WHEDA to annually issue a report on households with "worst case housing" needs in this state;
- WHEDA to issue bonds up to \$1,000,000 to make grants to housing authorities to provide rent assistance to individuals and families who are in danger of being evicted.

Workforce Development & Job and Income Supports

- Increase funding for the Job and Business Development Program (DWD) by \$799,400;
- Increase funding for the Skills Enhancement Program (SEP-DCF) by \$500,000;
- The bill increases the earned income threshold for SEP eligibility to 200 percent of the poverty line;
- Inclusion of homeless populations within Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) strategic plans;

- DWD pilot to offer job and employment services for individuals receiving housing vouchers or receiving services from state-funded homeless shelters. Pilot funded at \$500,000 in each fiscal year of the 2019-2021 biennium;
- Creation of a Household and Dependent Care Services Tax Credit.

Transportation Services and Coordination

- Increase the funding for the “Work-n-Wheels” program by \$249,450;
- Increases by 10% the total amount of state aid payments for mass transit systems serving areas having a population of less than 50,000;
- Requires DHS to determine and implement a reimbursement rate for nonemergency medical transportation services for Medical Assistance recipients who are nursing home residents that is the same as the prevalent brokerage reimbursement rate applied to other nonemergency medical transportation services for Medical Assistance recipients.

Access to Health Care

- The bill would authorize within the Department of Health Services a grant program to provide CAA’s with support to respond to the needs of communities and low-income families and individuals in crisis resulting from opioid addiction-related issues.
- The bill would provide \$800,000 to DHS to encourage the development and expansion of sober living residences.

Research

- \$50,000 mental health research on farmer suicide (DATCP);
- Creation of a Public Assistance Advisory Committee;
- DCF to collect statewide data on ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences)
- \$50,000 to support to the annual *Wisconsin Poverty Report*