



2024



Wisconsin Opportunity Act

The Wisconsin Opportunity Act seeks to address the growing rates of economic insecurity in Wisconsin. The bill authored by Senator Jeff Smith and Representative Lisa Subeck, provides a comprehensive blueprint for targeted investments in housing, transportation, employment and business development training, and other services. The bill is currently co-sponsored by 32 members and has been referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and the Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues, and Forestry, respectively.



Jeff Smith,
State Senator

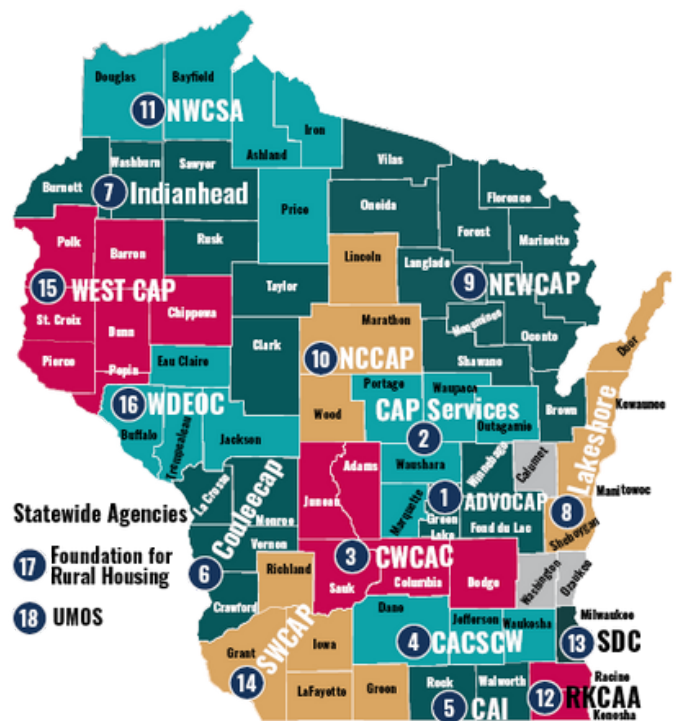


Lisa Subeck,
State Assembly

The WISCAP Network

Our network stretches' across Wisconsin and reaches nearly every county across the United States. As part of a national movement, the community action network was founded in 1964 as part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on poverty and from the advocacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Today in Wisconsin, our network includes sixteen local community action agencies and two single purpose agencies.

Our goal is to spark economic opportunity and improve quality of life for everyone in Wisconsin. As a network, we are innovators and advocates who are committed to making a lasting difference in our community.



Our Impact

The Wisconsin Community Action Network has always believed we can achieve the impossible. For more than a half-century, we have dreamed big and pushed the boundaries to help everyone in Wisconsin thrive. We believe that focusing our energy on our most vulnerable, lowest-income neighbors creates lasting change for our whole community.

Given our unique history, the Wisconsin Community Action Network is often called on to help tackle statewide problems and emergencies. One of the ways our network stepped in was during the pandemic, WISCAP and our member agencies were responsible for distributing over \$725 million dollars in direct aid and pandemic relief. Across the nation, Wisconsin was one of the first states to successfully pilot large scale rental assistance programs to prevent mass evictions and keep Wisconsinites in their homes.

Learn more about our pandemic response and impact at www.WISCAP.org or contact us directly.

What is in the **Wisconsin Opportunity Act**?

Wisconsin Community Service Block Grant

- Creation of a Wisconsin state supplement CSBG program [25% State Match]
- Increases the income cap for receiving services from a community action agency from 125% to 200% of federal poverty line.

Housing Stability

- Additional funding for the Critical Assistance Program.
- An additional \$5,000,000 for the Housing Assistance Program.
- Creates a rental assistance program for individuals and families who have suffered an economic hardship with household income up to 80% of County Median Income.
- Establish 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.

Workforce Development & Job and Income Supports

- Increase funding for the Job and Business Development Program (DWD)
- Increase funding for the Skills Enhancement Program (SEP-DCF)
- 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 2023-2025 biennium.
- The bill provides an additional \$1,000,000 in each fiscal year of the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium for DCF to provide assistance under the Transitional Jobs program for services outside of Milwaukee County.
- Requires DCF to establish an internet assistance program for low-income individuals and families up to 200% of Federal Poverty Level.

Health Care

- The bill would authorize within the Department of Health Services a grant program to provide CAAs 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 funding to DHS to encourage the development and expansion of sober living residences.
- Ensures early intervention services for children with lead in their blood (Birth to 3)
- Increases state funding for Lead-Safe Homes Program
- Authorizes one GPR position within DHS and increases funding to increase the Windows Plus lead exposure program.
- Increases the bonding authority for the Safe Drinking Water Loan Program

Transportation Services and Coordination

- Increase the funding for employment transportation assistance programs by 5%.
- Increases 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.

Legal Services

- DCF to provide up to \$100,000 in each fiscal year in matching funds to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation for civil legal services.
- DCF to provide a \$500,000 grant in each fiscal year to the Wisconsin Trust Account Foundation to provide grants to programs, up to \$75,000 each, that provide legal services.

Endorsements & Support

The undersigned organizations endorse the Wisconsin Opportunity Act, which aims to provide meaningful policies and investments to reduce poverty and fundamentally improve people's economic circumstances. This act furthers the goal of addressing multiple barriers to achieving economic stability by providing housing, health, job training, transportation, and income supports. The Act is the result of extensive consultation with stakeholders and local communities and features fundamentally sound practices for improving the lives of low and moderate-income households across the state. Enacting and implementing WOA will position our state as a leader in promoting inclusive economic development. As organizations dedicated to addressing poverty and promoting economic opportunity and security for all Wisconsinites, we strongly support passage of this critical piece of legislation.

- ADVOCAP
- Arts Wisconsin
- CAP Services, Inc
- Central Wisconsin Community Action Council
- Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
- Couleecap, Inc.
- Community Action Inc
- Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin
- Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
- Feeding Wisconsin
- Forward Community Investments
- Foundation for Rural Housing, Inc.
- Friends of Recovery Inc.
- Indianhead Community Action Agency
- International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District Council 7
- Lakeshore CAP, Inc. of Wisconsin
- Newcap, Inc.
- North Central Community Action Program, Inc.
- Northwest Wisconsin Community Services Agency
- Racine Kenosha Community Action Agency, Inc.
- Social Development Commission
- Southwestern Wisconsin Community Action Program (SWCAP)
- Stronger Together Fox Valley
- Tenant Resource Center
- UMOS, Inc.
- West Central Wisconsin Community Action Agency, Inc (West CAP)
- Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.
- Wisconsin Apartment Association
- Wisconsin Business Alliance
- Wisconsin Coalition Against Homelessness
- Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP)
- Wisconsin Coordinated Transportation Cooperative
- Wisconsin Council of Churches
- Wisconsin Early Childhood Association
- Wisconsin Habitat for Humanity
- Wisconsin Specialized Medical Vehicle Association
- Wisconsin Transportation Equity Alliance

Additional organizations that have registered support of the legislation through the Wisconsin Ethics Commission-

- End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin;
- The Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- City of Milwaukee
- National Association of Social Workers Wisconsin Chapter

Contact Us to register your support!

www.WISCAP.org

Take Action: Sample Resolution

Supporting the Wisconsin Opportunity Act

AT A MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL/BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS/SCHOOL BOARD OF _____ CITY/COUNTY, WISCONSIN, HELD AT _____, ON _____ 2024,

RESOLUTION - Urging Passage of the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (Bill AB 600.SB 577)

WHEREAS, the City Council/Board of Commissioners/School Board of the City/County of City/County, Wisconsin, does hereby find as follows:

WHEREAS, The Institute for Research on Poverty reports that 1 in 10 Wisconsinites live in poverty;

WHEREAS the Department of Public Instruction has identified more than 18,000 homeless children and youth throughout the state;

WHEREAS, more than 302,000 low-income Wisconsin renters pay more than half their income for housing;

WHEREAS, 34% of Wisconsinites struggle to afford the necessities of housing, child care, health care, food, and transportation, according to the United Way ALICE Study of Financial Hardship.

WHEREAS, 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 the systemic barriers to achieving economic stability by providing housing, health, job training, transportation, and income supports.

WHEREAS, the WOA is the result of extensive consultation with stakeholders and local communities and features fundamentally sound practices for improving the lives of low and moderate-income households across the state. Enacting and implementing WOA will position our state as a leader in promoting inclusive economic development.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY PROCLAIMED by the City Council/Board of Commissioners/School Board of the City/County of City/County, Wisconsin, that we support passage and enactment of the Wisconsin Opportunity Act in the Wisconsin State Legislature

Dated: _____ City Council/Board of Commissioners/School Board

Contact Us

We hope you will consider endorsing the Wisconsin Opportunity Act. For questions, clarifications or to set up a time to discuss ways to engage our network please contact us anytime.

Thank you and we look forward to working with you!

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learn more at **WISCAP.org**