



Badger State Housing Alliance Newsletter

February 2024



Advocacy Day!

Wednesday, February 14 – 9:30a – 4:00p

Wisconsin State Capitol – Room 415NW

BSHA is partnering with WISCAP on its Advocacy Day. The primary focus of the day will be supporting the Wisconsin Opportunity Act. While the Blueprint of Wisconsin Housing is in its initial stages, the housing component of the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (AB 600; SB 557) expresses BSHA priorities. That is a focus on creating and preserving affordable housing for Wisconsin's lowest-income renters and homeowners. Partnering with WISCAP allows BSHA to participate in an established advocacy day that will help educate the alliance on how to run an effective day, support good housing legislation, oppose harmful legislation, and build relationships and our identity as a network for the future.

WISCAP's State Legislative Agenda promotes **Access to Affordable Housing and Shelter, including:**

Creation of a rental assistance program for individuals and families who have suffered an economic hardship with household income up to 80% of the County Median Income. (Up to \$10 million)

Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing. Passage of legislation (AB 619/SB 576) to establish a revolving loan program administered by the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority (WHEDA) to increase the supply of workforce housing by housing authorities and community-based organizations.

Reduce discriminatory barriers to housing access and affordability. WISCAP supports the advancement of policies to extend housing access, reduce discrimination in housing, and empower tenants to advocate on their behalf.

Specifically, **the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (WOA) supports:**

- Additional funding for the Critical Assistance Program
- Additional funding 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 the County Median Income. (Up to \$10 million)
- Establish within WHEDA a pilot program for homeless families with children.

We want to support the WOA ([WOA Summary](#)) and meet with key housing committee representatives in the Assembly and Senate sharing our priorities with our elected representatives.

Legislators need to know our agenda and priorities. Our survey of member priorities and our work over the last year lists these priorities.

The legislative session will conclude on February 28. The most damaging items will be vetoed, but we are tracking the Criminalization of Homelessness effort and “pay for success” bills currently working through the legislature (Assembly Bill 689 and Senate Bill 669).

In terms of positive legislation, Habitat for Humanity’s bill ([AB 619](#), [SB 576](#)) would create a \$100 million workforce housing program to address the significant shortage of homes in Wisconsin. Funding for this bill would come from General Purpose Revenue and has the potential to attract bipartisan support. A key aspect of this bill would allow first-time homebuyers with incomes up to 120% of area median income (AMI) to use this program.

If you are planning to join us please [register](#).

HOME ARP Grant Fund Applications Available:

<https://energyandhousing.wi.gov/Pages/AgencyResources/home-arp.aspx>

These grants can be used for supportive services, affordable housing, planning and capacity building. HOME-ARP Supportive Services applications are due by **11:59 PM CST on March 8, 2024**. Please check out the web page for more information.

Support Health Care for Wisconsin’s Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

SchoolHouse Connection is working with the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services (WAHRS) in support of [SB 704](#) and its companion bill [AB 729](#). These bills would provide the [more than 2,000 unaccompanied youth](#) experiencing homelessness in Wisconsin with access to independently consent to their own medical, dental, and mental health care, which is critical to their well-being.

Unaccompanied youth, defined as individuals under 18 without a parent or guardian in their lives and experiencing homelessness, often find themselves in this situation due to factors such as poverty, family instability, or dysfunction. Notably, they are not under the care of the child welfare system. Current laws mandating parental consent, unfortunately, hinder physical and mental health care providers from delivering the necessary treatment to these unaccompanied youth.

Passing SB 704/AB 729 would allow Wisconsin to join 34 other states, including Indiana and Minnesota, that have laws allowing minors experiencing homelessness and on their own to consent to routine care.

Urge your state senator to support SB 704/AB 729 today!

- Find your senator [here](#).
- Find your representative [here](#).

Find more information [here](#).



Cooperman's Corner: Housing Advocacy Organizer, Courtney Cooperman

Support Full Funding for Voucher Renewals in Federal Budget



Reforming LIHTC to Serve Renters with the Greatest Needs: A Call to Action

After months of negotiation, Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) and Representative Jason Smith (R-MO), who lead their respective chambers' committees with jurisdiction over tax issues, released [bipartisan legislation](#) to expand the Child Tax Credit, extend expiring corporate tax provisions, and expand the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC). The package, however, does

not include [key reforms](#) that would enable the LIHTC program to better serve renters with the lowest incomes and communities with the greatest needs.

While LIHTC is the nation's largest source of financing for affordable rental homes, the tax credit does not typically make homes affordable to extremely low-income (ELI) renters making at or below 30% of Area Median Income—those who face the greatest shortage of affordable homes and are at the greatest risk of homelessness. Unless ELI renters in LIHTC properties receive additional support, such as Housing Choice Vouchers, they are [likely to be severely cost-burdened](#).

The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) and partner organizations are advocating for three pivotal [reforms](#) to LIHTC: 1) an expansion of the ELI basis boost, which incentivizes developments that set aside at least 20% of units for ELI households or those exiting homelessness, and 2) the designation of Tribal areas and 3) rural areas as Difficult to Develop Areas, which makes them automatically eligible for a basis boost and therefore makes development more financially feasible in these areas.

The House Ways and Means Committee held a [markup](#) and vote on the tax package on January 19, and the bill passed out of committee on a vote of 40-3. Notably, Representative Gwen Moore (D-WI-04) was one of three representatives to vote against the bill, [calling it a "missed opportunity"](#) and highlighting its failure to help Tribal communities.

While the package that passed out of committee does not include key LIHTC reforms, the legislation has not yet passed the full House or the Senate, and it is not too late to take action! Advocates should [continue to push their members of Congress](#) to adopt key reforms that would equip LIHTC to better serve people with the greatest housing needs.

Visit NLIHC's [Legislative Action Center](#) to [send a message to your members of Congress](#) in support of LIHTC reform provisions.

For more information, please reach out to Courtney Cooperman at the National Low Income Housing Coalition: ccooperman@nlihc.org.



Curds of Wisdom



[REGISTER HERE](#)

Wed. Feb. 7th at 12 pm

The Curds of Wisdom speaker series is a free, monthly forum focused on creating and preserving housing options throughout Wisconsin. The series aims to share effective practices and build relationships among advocates and practitioners. Please join us whether you are an elected official or a motivated neighbor! Curds of Wisdom is co-sponsored by [WISCAP](#), [League of Wisconsin Municipalities](#), and the [Wisconsin Council of Churches](#).

We are one week early this month in preparation for our first WI Advocacy Day with WISCAP on Wednesday, February 14 at the Capitol in Madison as well as our Capitol Hill Day with the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) in Washington DC on March 21. Join **Marlo Fields**, WISCAP's Housing Specialist and member of the Badger State Housing Alliance, **Martha Collins** of the Urban Economic Development Association (UEDA), a senior leader in coalition building, policy, program management, fund development, and nonprofit advocacy in issues that promote equity and economic opportunity, and **Courtney Cooperman** of the NLIHC for an exciting discussion on housing advocacy. This conversation will be facilitated by **Kristine Gironalista** of the BSHA.

Don't forget to eat all your curds! Click [here](#) if for archived recordings of Curds, including January's conversation with WHEDA CEO, Elmer Moore!

If you have ideas for our Curds of Wisdom Speaker Series, please reach out to **Marlo Fields** and **Andy Heidt** at mfields@wiscap.org and aheidt@wiscap.org



LIHTC: The Good, The Bad, and The Very Complicated

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, we have all heard about them, but few of us could talk at length about this important tool. Luckily for us, our friends at Shelterforce have organized a series to help us look into this complex and integral financial tool. Read more [here](#).

The Federal Budget falls short for low-income renters and the unhoused.

Read the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's [statement](#) on how Congress's Bipartisan Tax Proposal fails our most vulnerable populations.

Badger State Housing Alliance

We are in the process of building a contact list of individuals who would like to receive updates on housing issues across the state. Please feel free to pass this newsletter along to any colleagues, elected officials, friends, family members or anyone you think would benefit from this effort. You can also share the link below for folks to sign up for this distribution list.

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