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**Badger State Housing Alliance Newsletter**

January 2024



**Save the Date(s)!!!**

As we enter 2024, many spend time reflecting on the previous year. In our reflection, it is important to remember where we've shined the brightest and when we've been at our lowest and how we can improve to be better people to our loved ones, colleagues, and communities. A new year brings forth new opportunities for the Badger State Housing Alliance to appreciate where we started and where we can go as a network for the foreseeable future. Additionally, it allows us to reflect on the possibilities and opportunities Wisconsin needs to create when it comes to affordable housing.

**Wisconsin Advocacy Day:** Please consider contributing your reflections with BSHA on our first Advocacy Day on **Wednesday, February 14th** in Madison. We are combining our advocacy day with WISCAP's Advocacy Day but will focus on priority housing issues while participating in solidarity with our friends and co-workers in the Wisconsin Community Action Network. **To learn click here: [Policy & Advocacy - WISCAP](#)**

**National Housing Advocacy Day:** The BSHA will also be participating in the [National Low Income Housing Coalition Policy Forum](#) on **Thursday, March 21**. NLIHC's Housing Policy Forum, Capitol Hill Day gives advocates the opportunity to meet with their members of Congress to urge them to oppose funding cuts to affordable housing and homelessness programs, expand resources for vital programs, advance anti-racist policies, and support legislation that would improve the lives of millions of low-income people. This will be a hybrid event and we will make it accessible to those unable to attend in person! **To learn more click here: <https://nlihc.org/resource/nlihc-housing-policy-forum-2024-feature-hill-day-advocacy-center>**

Marlo Fields will be coordinating efforts from DC. If you are interested either the state or federal advocacy days please take a second to and fill out this [form](#) and/or email [mfields@wiscap.org](mailto:mfields@wiscap.org) and Marlo will be in contact with you shortly.

Check out this amazing advocacy tool: **NLIHC's Legislative Action Center.**

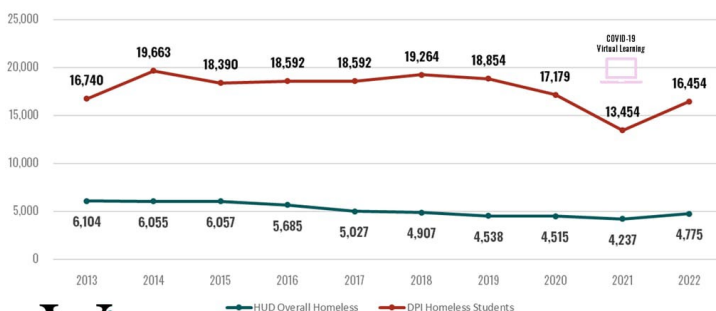


## Unpacking Wisconsin's Legislation on Homelessness

In December of 2023, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) released it's [2023 Annual Homeless Assessment Report: Part 1: Point-in-Time Estimates](#), an annual snapshot of the number of individuals in shelters, temporary housing, and in unsheltered settings. The report found more than 650,000 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2023, a **12% increase from 2022**. The report also includes the Housing Inventory Count of shelter and housing resources to serve people experiencing homelessness.

This year Wisconsin observed a 13% increase in the HUD annual [Point-In-Time count](#) of individuals experiencing homelessness. More alarming, the number of school-age **children experiencing homelessness has increased 22%** according to the Department of Public Instruction.

Number of People Experiencing Homelessness in Wisconsin by Year, 2013-2022



*The HUD report follows the announcement of the controversial 2023 Wisconsin Senate Bill 669, which aims to authorize the use of some public spaces for homeless encampments in Wisconsin. The bill would make living in “unauthorized spaces” illegal. Furthermore, only unhoused people who consent to substance use or mental health screenings or those with a*

*diagnosis would be allowed in the sanctioned encampments. The proposed Wisconsin legislation seemingly ignores a growing body of evidence and HUD policies shown to have a greater likelihood of housing the unhoused. Considered an act to criminalize homelessness, Senate Bill 669 would require the act of living as an unhoused person to be a class C misdemeanor punishable by fines and imprisonment. Opponents view the legislation as placing greater pressure and increasing costs of operating jails and the criminal justice system.*

Advocates look to a recent study conducted in La Crosse, Wisconsin which found offering permanent housing and support from a case worker saved the county more than \$40,000 per person, per year. Unlike Bill 669, a pay for success model (not pay for performance model) decreases costs associated with expensive public services such as shelters, jail, state mental health facilities and emergency room visits by providing housing and services, rather than fines and punishment. Pay for success models benefit providers in increasing front-end resources to implement programs with the goal of reducing public costs. When successful a proportion of the public cost savings are used to continue to operate the project making the effort more sustainable. The 2023 Senate Bill 669 would use a pay for performance concept wherein already limited funds could be withheld from providers unless the unhoused persons or family achieve certain milestones. This proposed model could also result in fewer charities being able to offer homeless services since there are existing dollar-for-dollar match requirements already in place on homeless services grants.

An alternate approach to addressing the growing housing crisis is the Wisconsin Opportunity Act. Authored by Senator Jeff Smith and Representative Lisa Subeck, the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (AB 600; SB 557), advances comprehensive legislation designed to aid communities in the fight against poverty, calling for a renewed investment in housing, transportation, employment and business development training, and other services. The Wisconsin Opportunity Act includes new funding for homeless services and eviction prevention rental assistance programs. The Wisconsin Opportunity Act is currently co-sponsored by 32 members, has been referred to the Assembly Committee on State Affairs and the Senate Committee on Housing, Rural Issues, and Forestry, respectively.

## **Housing Justice & Congregational Futures**

*February 1st, 8:30-2:00pm  
St Michael's Parish (611 Stark St, Wausau)*

The way faith communities gather is in a season of transition. Many have large buildings that were used in an era when congregations were larger and had busier schedules with events happening throughout the week. Some believe they may conclude ministry in that place in the next 5-10 years. It is time for us to re-examine our buildings and ask how they can continue to serve our communities.

One widespread community need across Wisconsin is safe, affordable housing.

We have begun to imagine what it would look like if faith communities used our assets such as buildings, people, and faith that calls us to love our neighbor to advocate for housing justice in our cities?

Faith communities in north central Wisconsin are invited to join together to share, listen, and dream about how they could have an impact on their communities through housing justice.

## **BSHA is Evolving!**

Based on our experience in the last year and the input from our steering committee meetings, we are changing our structure. We will continue our quarterly meetings ([Link](#)), and Steering committee meetings ([Link](#)). Our Affordable Rental and Home Ownership Committees will be merged into an Advocacy Committee ([Link](#)) and our Sustainability Committee will become Outreach ([Link](#)).

Specific work on home ownership will be a focus of the Buy ([link](#)) component of Take Root Wisconsin ([link](#)) with policy recommendations flowing to our advocacy committee. For information on Take Root please email Johanna Jimenez.

We want to continue to evolve and grow the network. To do this effectively and collaboratively your input is needed.

Please complete the following brief survey to help us: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/8V9T6N9>.

## ***Environment Sustainability and Affordable Housing***

Check out this **article about cutting edge affordable housing and how large utilities are part of the barriers to sustainability and affordability**: [https://captimes.com/news/government/solar-can-save-renters-big-money-but-wisconsin-law-gets-in-the-way/article\\_eb743268-9912-11ee-9fa1-f7dd2b5c5a81.html](https://captimes.com/news/government/solar-can-save-renters-big-money-but-wisconsin-law-gets-in-the-way/article_eb743268-9912-11ee-9fa1-f7dd2b5c5a81.html).

We should align with solar and environmental advocates to pursue single meter hook ups for affordable housing projects. Alliances with environmental advocates can expand our ability to move forward on issues while saving money, lowering rent and housing costs while using some of these savings to provide high quality, customized supportive services to households as needed.

## **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—Take Action!***

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is the nation's largest affordable housing production program. LIHTC, however, is rarely sufficient on its own to build or preserve homes affordable to households with the lowest incomes. The majority (58%) of extremely low-income renters living in LIHTC developments who do not also receive rental assistance are severely cost-burdened, paying more than half their incomes on rent.

Congress is currently negotiating a bipartisan agreement to expand the Child Tax Credit and revive several expired business tax incentives. If a deal is reached, the tax package could also include resources to expand and reform LIHTC. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) is advocating for any expansion of LIHTC to include key policy reforms to better serve households with the greatest needs. These provisions include:

- Incentivizing the development of housing affordable to extremely low-income (ELI) renters by expanding the basis boost for housing developments that set aside at least 20% of units for households with extremely low incomes or those experiencing homelessness.
- Designating Tribal and rural communities as “Difficult to Develop Areas (DDAs),” which would make it more financially feasible for developers to build affordable homes in these communities.

All of these reforms are included in legislation with strong bipartisan support, the “Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act” ([S.1557/H.R.3238](#)). Advocates should weigh in with their members of Congress and encourage them to include key LIHTC reforms in any bipartisan tax package. Members of the [Senate Finance Committee](#) and [House Ways & Means Committee](#), which have jurisdiction over tax issues, are especially important targets for advocacy. Senator Ron Johnson and Representative Gwen Moore serve on these committees.

Visit NLIHC's [Legislative Action Center](#) to [send a message to your members of Congress](#) urging them to ensure that new LIHTC resources can reach households with the greatest needs. If you have questions, please reach out to Courtney Cooperman, housing advocacy organizer at NLIHC, at [ccooperman@nlihc.org](mailto:ccooperman@nlihc.org).

## Reform LIHTC to Better Serve People with the Greatest Needs



Tell Congress to pair LIHTC expansions with key reforms to better serve households with extremely low incomes.

TAKE ACTION →



National Low Income  
Housing Coalition

## Curds of Wisdom



[REGISTER HERE](#)

**Wed. January 11th at 12pm**

In January, we have a special guest **Elmer Moore, Jr.**, CEO and Executive Director of WHEDA, the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority, to discuss what is new with WHEDA. Lynnsey Erickson, Deputy Mayor City of Oshkosh

and Community Health Strategist, Winnebago County Health Department and volunteer from the Badger State Housing Alliance will moderate this exciting discussion.

Mr. Moore will discuss WHEDA's new Workforce Housing opportunities including Restoring Main Street, From Vacancy-to-Vitality and other programs including their Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and first-time homebuyer work. Please sign up for this exciting discussion.

Don't forget to eat all your curds! **Click [here](#)** if for achieved recordings of Curds!

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



## 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.

[Learn more about BSHA](#)

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