



## Badger State Housing Alliance Newsletter

April 2024



### Badger State Housing Alliance is Ready for Spring!

Through the work of our members, the Badger State Housing Alliance had quite a productive first quarter. In the first three months of the year, we have held a state-wide advocacy day, organized seven federal congressional visits, continued to host our Curds of Wisdom webinar series with some of the highest participation rates we have seen, and have grown our membership greatly.

However, we know there is much more to do. Despite the unusually warm and highly successful winter, the BSHA welcomes spring with open arms! Over the next months, the Advocacy Committee will work on a “Blueprint for WI Housing” that will feature our state-wide goals and be a useful advocacy tool for Wisconsin communities, organizations, and advocates. The Outreach Committee will continue to organize our Curds of Wisdom series and look at new ways to engage our members and our communities.

This year is off to a great start, but we need your continued support, feedback, and time to continue our efforts. Please consider joining any of our committees or our Steering Committee. If you have additional questions don’t hesitate to reach out to Marlo ([mfields@wiscap.org](mailto:mfields@wiscap.org)).

### BSHA Important Dates in April!

Want to get more involved in BSHA? April has plenty of opportunities to join in the fun. If you are interested in any of the committees, please sign-up [here](#).

- April 10 – Curds of Wisdom at Noon – [Register](#)
- April 18 – BSHA Advocacy Committee at 11:00 am – [Zoom](#)
- April 18 – BSHA Steering Committee at 8:30 am – [Zoom](#)
- April 25 - BSHA Outreach Committee at 9:00 am – [Zoom](#)

## **BSHA Goes to Washington**

*In March, the Badger State Housing Alliance led a delegation of advocates as part of the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Capitol Hill Day. The group was able to meet with 7 of the 10 Wisconsin congressional offices, including both of our Senators! Holly Odeja from the Wisconsin Partnership for Housing Development, helped organize and participated in our visits. This was her first time doing this type of advocacy. Read her story below and know that all of us can become fierce advocates to advance affordable housing in our state!*

As a first-timer at the NLIHC Forum and Capitol Hill Day, I found my experience incredibly inspiring. The day and a half of advocacy-related plenary and breakout sessions helped instill a fire in me and the attendees leading up to Hill Day. The plenary sessions were especially exceptional as we heard from various speakers who are all champions in their space, whether it be politics, housing development, advocacy, or journalism. My favorite plenary speakers were Congresswoman Cori Bush and Congressman Maxwell Frost both of whom have personal experiences with homelessness and were able to rise above to become leaders in their respective communities and help their constituents who struggle with the very same battles they once faced with housing.

I also found the breakout sessions to be just as compelling. One very eye-opening session spoke to the housing disparities for individuals who are re-entering society post-incarceration. This is a group of individuals who are severely underserved in many institutions and are very vulnerable to housing issues. I was lucky enough to attend all seven sessions on Capitol Hill Day with Peggy (Last Name) and Ray (Last Name) representing FREE Out of Milwaukee ([link](#)), an organization that focuses on serving women who are justice system-impacted. It was very insightful to hear how those same issues I learned about in the breakout session impact thousands of women here in Wisconsin.

Each congressional meeting was unique in its own way through the interaction or feedback I received from the staffer depending on which office I met with. Because a majority of Wisconsin's delegation leans right, housing is typically not a top priority for them. However, I was surprised to see that regardless of which side of the aisle they were on, many staffers were interested in hearing about these issues as we know the housing crisis is not a red or blue issue, but rather an American issue. Some of these meetings also included virtual participants, holding 6 out of 7 of the meetings in a hybrid format. This was very helpful in capturing more interaction from constituents from representative districts and an effective way of sharing with the staffer/representative the issues impacting their district. Initially, I felt very intimidated to attend these meetings but was surprised by the willingness of the staffers to listen and their desire to understand the housing crisis in Wisconsin. All in all, I felt as though the Forum the two days prior had really helped ignite a deeper passion behind the importance of advocating for these issues at a higher level. It was also very encouraging to be around many others at the Forum who were excited to rally behind these same issues.

## Cooperman's Corner: Housing Advocacy Organizer, Courtney Cooperman

### Support Full Funding for Voucher Renewals in Federal Budget



### Advocating For Federal Housing Resources: Join NLIHC's Capitol Hill Day

After months of negotiation, Congress passed a Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) budget that includes \$8.3 billion in HUD spending increases above fiscal year 2023 levels. This funding increase is especially notable given the political context. Last June, Congress passed the "Fiscal Responsibility Act," which caps overall spending for domestic programs at approximately Fiscal Year 2023 levels and limits spending increases in Fiscal Year 2025 to 1% in exchange for raising the federal debt ceiling. These tight spending limits made it an uphill battle for housing advocates to secure much-needed increases in HUD funding. Thanks to your advocacy, we got it done!

Because of rising rents, the Housing Choice Voucher program needed a larger-than-expected funding increase just to maintain the number of people served. The draft House bill could have led to a loss of 112,000 housing vouchers upon turnover, including the loss of 1,300 vouchers in Wisconsin. The draft Senate bill could have led to a loss of 80,000 vouchers upon turnover, including the loss of 900 vouchers in Wisconsin. Fortunately, housing advocates showed up in full force, and Congress recognized the urgency of full funding for voucher renewals. As a result, HUD should be able to renew all existing vouchers and expand rental assistance to an additional 3,000 households.

NLIHC's other top priorities also received increased or stable resources:

- The Homeless Assistance Grants program was provided a \$418 million increase in funding from FY23-enacted levels to a total of \$4.05 billion.
- The Public Housing Capital Fund received \$3.41 billion, or a modest increase of \$30 million compared to last year's levels, and the Public Housing Operating Fund received \$5.5 billion, or \$367 million more than in FY23.
- The Native American Housing Block Grant program received a funding increase of \$324 million for a total of \$1.1 billion in FY24.

- The Eviction Prevention Grant program was level-funded at \$20 million. This is a win because the House bill would have zeroed out the program's funding.

For a more detailed analysis of the bill and funding amounts for other programs, read our [analysis](#) in *Memo to Members & Partners* and browse our [updated budget chart](#).

This major victory would not have been possible without all of you who met with, emailed, called, or tweeted at your members of Congress over the past year! Thank you for your persistent advocacy, and I encourage you to take the time to celebrate the impact of your hard work.

Of course, the time for advocacy never stops—you can keep the momentum going by reaching out to members of Congress and urging them to support bipartisan legislation, such as the “Eviction Crisis Act” and “Family Stability and Opportunity Vouchers Act,” that addresses the housing needs of the lowest-income renters. With just a few clicks, use the [Legislative Action Center](#) to contact your members of Congress about key legislation to increase the supply of affordable homes, keep renters stably housed, and strengthen tenant protections



## 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](#).

In April join [Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin](#) Executive Director Peter Lewandowski and [Movin' Out](#) Home Ownership Program Director Vivian Rayam for a conversation about two important programs that support affordable home ownership in Wisconsin. This conversation will be facilitated by Heather Dummer Combs, [Take Root Milwaukee](#) Program Director of the Urban Economic Development Association of Wisconsin (UEDA)

Don't forget to eat all your curds (or go back for seconds!) Click [here](#) if for achieved recordings of Curds, including March's in-depth look at Wisconsin Community Land Trusts!

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



## **Wisconsin Policy Forum finds homelessness on the rise.**

In the years before the pandemic, Wisconsin's reported homeless population shrank after its programs to serve them shifted their focus from temporary to permanent housing to meet updated federal requirements. For the past two years, however, homelessness has risen amid growing housing costs and other factors, and efforts to combat it may now be impacted by the end of federal pandemic relief funds that have been used by some governments for addressing homelessness.

Read the full report from the Wisconsin Policy Forum [here](#)

## **SCOTUS to hear monumental case on criminalization of unhoused populations**

In April, the U.S. Supreme Court will take on *Grant's Pass v. Johnson* a landmark case that may determine if municipalities have the right to arrest and jail unhoused populations. The National Alliance to End Homelessness recently released its [statement](#) on the landmark case. [Read more](#) about the case and its potential tragic effects on unhoused populations and broader society. One thing is certain, criminalizing homelessness is NOT an ethical, financial, or effective solution to eradicate homelessness

## **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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