

WISCONSIN COALITION AGAINST HOMELESSNESS

PRESS RELEASE:

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET INCLUDES HOMELESS INITIATIVE!!!!

For the first time in 25 years a Wisconsin Governor has included new resources and related policy in a budget proposal. Joe Volk, Executive Director of the coalition stated "Every night there are 20,000 Wisconsinites who are homeless. We commend the Governor for including funding to reduce homelessness in Wisconsin. It has been nearly 25 years since a Governor of Wisconsin has taken notice of homelessness." Volk added "We are especially grateful to Lt. Governor Rebecca Kleefisch for making the issue of homelessness a top priority of her office in 2016. The Lt. Governor crisscrossed the State in 2016 visiting homeless shelters and other homeless services. We commend her the energy and compassion she has demonstrated in tackling this important issue."

Here are the items in the Governor's proposed budget that relate to homelessness:

Provide ten \$50,000 grants funded by TANF funds to homeless shelters for intensive case management services for homeless families, with a focus on financial management counseling, continued school enrollment for children, connecting parents who are job training graduates or who have a recent work history with their local workforce development board to employment, and enrolling unemployed or underemployed parents in W-2 or FSET. Provide \$500,000 in each year or \$1,000,000 over the biennium.

Authorize the Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority to pilot a prioritization of Housing Choice (Section 8) Vouchers to chronically homeless individuals on the Housing Choice Voucher wait-list to replace the current wait-list structure that does not give priority by housing status, and provide case management services to each chronically homeless individual or family who receives a Housing Choice

Voucher as a result of their wait-list prioritization.

Provide \$660,800 GPR in fiscal year 2017-18 and \$660,800 GPR in fiscal year 2018-19 to expand the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success (OARS) program to five additional counties to serve mentally ill inmates upon release from prison. OARS helps reentering inmates who are at a high risk of homelessness secure stable and affordable housing along with other services.

Pilot a homelessness employment program based on Albuquerque's "Better Way" initiative to provide homeless individuals with work experience and work routine through jobs cleaning up municipal parks and public spaces with a goal of transitioning them into permanent employment. Provide \$75,000 GPR in each year or \$150,000 GPR over the biennium to a Wisconsin municipality to pilot the program, with a \$50,000 matching grant requirement. Profiled in the Washington Post, the model deploys a van to pick up homeless people from shelters and pays them to clean up municipal parks and public spaces to get work experience and work routines and then helps transition them into private employment.

Amend Wisconsin's transitional housing statute to create flexibility for grant funds to support homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing, which are evidence-based programs with proven success rates.

Create a homeless services coordinator position at the Department of Health Services to work with homeless agencies and municipalities to develop a 1915(c) waiver modeled on Louisiana's waiver to use Medicaid funds for intensive case management to achieve transition to housing, including search assistance, tenant training, and securing required documentation. The waiver should integrate DHS's focus on superutilizers, since homeless individuals often have a high frequency of ER visits.

For more information please contact Joseph Volk at 414-333-7393 or joseph.volk01@gmail.com
