

Affordable and Quality Housing Policies Impact Health

HOUSING IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

Our homes, and those of our neighbors, play a critical role in shaping our health and the health of the whole community. Housing is related to health through several pathways. Housing is a substantial expense, reflecting the largest single monthly expenditure for many individuals and families. Strategies focused on improving housing policies have resulted in better health through reductions of malnutrition, depression, anxiety, and injury - such as lead poisonings. It is important to ensure all individuals have access to and are able to maintain a safe and affordable home regardless of race, ethnicity, income or any other factors.



Priority Areas for Housing

- *Expand low income housing tax credits for developers and rental assistance vouchers for renters*
- *Fund programs to eliminate / abate lead paint, soil and pipes, including but not limited to a statutory provision requiring that lead remediation dollars be used for that dedicated purpose.*

Expand Low Income Housing Tax Credits for Developers and Rental Assistance Vouchers for Renters

BACKGROUND

Affordable housing policies help promote healthy families and communities. Low income housing tax credits (LIHTC) are a way to incentivize affordable housing development. Evidence shows that LIHTC allocations must be balanced between higher opportunity neighborhoods and neighborhoods with higher poverty rates and minority populations, and that market-based approaches to housing must include supports for both developers and renters.

KEY POINTS

- **Programs that designate funds for low income families and individuals can decrease disparities in access to quality housing and housing-related health outcomes.**
- **Housing rehabilitation efforts** in low income and declining neighborhoods may also have positive effects on neighborhood quality and stability.
- **LIHTC are reducing poverty rates** in high-poverty neighborhoods.
- Strategically allocating units in low income and impoverished areas, along with other factors, help grow the economy in these areas.
- **In 2017, in Wisconsin, more than 180,000 children lived in poverty.** 49% of Wisconsin's children in poverty were living in a household that spends more than 1/3 of its income on housing costs.

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Please support efforts to expand low income housing tax credits for developers, and provide rental assistance for renters in order to support healthy families and communities.

Fund Programs and Update Statutory Provisions to Eliminate and Abate Lead Hazards in Paint, Soil and Pipes

BACKGROUND

According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, “In Wisconsin, childhood lead poisoning is a housing-based disease caused most frequently by swallowing, and sometimes breathing in, dust from lead-based paint in older homes. This disease affects our most vulnerable citizens—young children. Lead causes injury to the brain and other body systems and can last a lifetime and across generations. Fortunately, it is entirely preventable.” Lead water pipes and lead in soil are also sources of lead contamination in parts of Wisconsin. In Wisconsin, children under the age of 6 are the population most vulnerable to the effects of lead exposure.

Lead interferes with the normal development of a child’s brain and can result in lower IQ, learning difficulties, reduced educational achievement, and greater likelihood of behavior problems like aggression, hyperactivity and delinquency.

Lead hazard remediation can be prohibitively expensive for homeowners, and sources of funding support vary widely by community.

KEY POINTS

- **A Greater proportion of children in Wisconsin test positive for blood lead** compared to the national average. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) blood lead reference level for initiating public health actions to prevent further exposure and mitigate health effects is 5 micrograms per deciliter. It is estimated that over 500,000 children in Wisconsin have Blood Lead Levels (BLL) at or above this level.
- **Young children and fetuses are the most vulnerable to the effects of lead.** Their bodies are developing at an incredibly fast pace. The most common way that young children are exposed to lead is from chipping and peeling paint that becomes lead-tainted dust.
- **Childhood lead poisoning occurs at higher rates among families with lower incomes**, those living in older homes, and those residing in urban areas than their counterparts.

Resources: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/lead/index.htm, www.countyhealthrankings.org/reports/state-reports/2019-wisconsin-report

LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

Please dedicate legislative efforts and increase funding to abate lead-contaminated soil, paint, and water, and allow for change in state statute to require that lead hazard remediation funds be used for that dedicated purpose in order to comprehensively and adequately address this ongoing public health issue.