

Small Programs

Many important services received increased funding that helped restore their budgets after years of cuts and erosion by inflation during the past eight years. Several programs are highlighted below. While added support is significant, far more is needed after years of budget cuts and erosion by inflation.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ohio has also seen a troubling increase in homelessness recently. Between 2012 and 2017, total homelessness in Ohio increased 20% to over 70,000 and the number of homeless babies increased 53% to nearly 3,000 infants (under age 1).¹ Ohio also needs more affordable housing, with just 42 affordable rental units available for every 100 low-income tenant households in Ohio.²

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund supports development of affordable housing and provides resources for homeless shelters statewide. It is supported by part of the County Recorder's fee on real estate transfers. Although need has increased, revenue lags behind the original \$50 million per year goal. Advocates asked for a boost of \$16 million over the biennium to meet rising need. Legislators increased the county recorder's fee for the first time in 16 years, which should add between \$5 million and \$6 million over the two-year budget period for affordable housing and homeless programs.³ The new support is badly needed but it will take much more funding to ensure that all Ohioans have safe, stable, and affordable housing.⁴

BUREAU OF WAGE & HOUR ADMINISTRATION

Funding for the Bureau is down 24% on an inflation-adjusted basis since 2010. Today just five investigators and one supervisor oversee wage theft enforcement in a state with nearly six million workers -- just one investigator for every 961,167 workers; the same small group is also responsible for enforcing prevailing wage requirements to protect Ohio's construction workers.⁵ Lawmakers increased appropriations for the bureau by \$200,000 over the biennium, bringing total 2-year appropriation to \$2.4 million, an increase of 9%. This is a small increase compared to the need, insufficient to provide proper oversight of the ongoing crisis of wage theft and other workplace violations.⁶

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The new budget increases state funding for domestic violence shelters and services for victims by \$2.95 million, more than doubling state support and providing an agency line item of \$1 million a year through the Attorney General's office.

There is federal money for services for those affected by domestic violence - In 2018, local agencies throughout the state received \$12.2 million from the federal Office on Violence Against Women. The state Department of Public Safety's Office of Criminal Justice Services received \$4.8 million for distribution. The problem is, it is not enough, and it does not reach all corners of the state in sufficient quantities.

More than 75,000 domestic disputes were reported to Ohio police in 2018.⁷ In the year ending July 1, 2018, 91 Ohioans were killed as a result of domestic violence.⁸ The National Network to End Domestic Violence found that 216 Ohioans were turned away for domestic violence prevention or recovery services in a single day in 2018.

Although local levies support local services for the victims of domestic violence, not all communities have the resources to provide local funding so some places have little or no services. Far more state funding is needed to provide these critical services in all parts of the state.⁹

OHIO CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

As hate crimes rise and more sexual harassment victims come forward, long-term erosion of state funding for the Ohio Civil Rights Commission threatens the state's ability to protect residents from discrimination and harassment.¹⁰ The new budget boosts the agency's funding by \$2.6 million to \$19.2 million a year, including \$1 million a year in state GRF dollars, a 9.5% increase. This modest state increase replenishes a reserve fund taken in the last budget and covers inflation, but does not restore the agency to earlier levels of support.

Ohio Historical Society between 2008 and 2019, lawmakers reduced funding for the Ohio History Connection operations by 43 percent (adjusted for inflation).¹¹ The biggest drop occurred during the recession, but in the recovery, policymakers never made significant restoration.¹² In this budget, lawmakers appropriated new funds of \$5.9 million, a 25% increase over the prior biennium.

GEOLOGIC MAPPING

The Ohio Geological Survey (OGS), a state office related to the United States Geologic Survey, has lost 74% of its state funding – a total of \$2 million annually – over the past decade. Organized as a branch of Ohio Department of Natural Resources, OGS conducts research and maintains data that serve both public and private needs, particularly in natural resource and commercial development. This office also monitors abandoned mines, sinkholes, areas of potential landslides and other natural threats to the land; convenes Ohio's seismic monitoring network to understand trends in and causes of earthquakes and conduct research on Ohio's coastal erosion, disseminating the information to lakefront property owners to help them protect the value and safety of their property.¹³

Lawmakers appropriated new funding of \$1.7 million over the 2020-21 biennium, an increase of 21%. This will help municipalities and private investors in planning and building projects.

The small programs described here received sometimes substantial increases in the new budget, but in most cases legislators and the governor left the agencies short of what they once were, adjusting for inflation, or made insufficient increases.

Endnotes

1. "A Picture of Ohio's Homeless in 2017: More Children, Aging Adults, and Families," Ohio Housing Finance Agency, Jan. 3, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/2l5ZhlN>
2. "Report Shows Gap in Affordable Housing in Ohio," National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2018 at <https://bit.ly/2QysSBE>
3. Ferencik, Mark, "Ohio Housing Trust Fund get first budget increase in 16 years," The Columbus Dispatch, updated July 22, 2018 at <https://bit.ly/35tJVcl>
4. Ohio has a huge gap in affordable housing. According to the Ohio Housing Finance Agency, "...there is a lack of affordable housing for low income renters. There are only 43 affordable and available rental units per 100 ELI renter households. All 88 counties have a shortage of rental housing for ELI renters. Only 14 counties are meeting more than half of local need for ELI renters," Executive summary, Ohio Housing Finance Agency, at <https://bit.ly/2OCyd9I>
5. Halbert, Hannah, "Budget Bite: Wage Theft Ignored in Proposed Budget," Policy Matters Ohio, April 10, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/2Is5Wim>
6. Shields, Michael, "Wage Theft: A Quiet Crisis in Ohio," Policy Matters Ohio, April 10 2019 at <https://bit.ly/2OsxXKr>; see also Shields, Michael, "Some Ohio Workers at Higher Risk of Wage Theft," Policy Matters Ohio, September 25, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/31XGGZe>
7. Ohio Attorney General, "Domestic Violence Report," at <https://bit.ly/2n9IMpe>
8. Ohio Domestic Violence Network Fatalities Report for 2017-18 at <https://bit.ly/2lEmU4L>
9. Shields, Michael, "Budget Bite: Domestic Violence Prevention and Response," {Policy Matters Ohio, May 21, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/31NC0tw>
10. Patton, Wendy, "Ohio Civil Rights Commission: Fighting discrimination with diminished state support," Policy Matters Ohio, February 14, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/2BH5bi8>
11. Patton, Wendy, "Eroded services in the state budget," Policy Matters Ohio, January 16, 2019 at <https://bit.ly/2HhI5Vs>
12. "Basic services in Ohio continue to be weakened in the 2018-19 state budget," Policy Matters Ohio, June 2017 at <https://bit.ly/2l65Y6Z>
13. "Cutting into Ohio's Bedrock: State slashes funding for Geological Survey," Policy Matters Ohio, August 23, 2012 at <https://bit.ly/2oVSY5H>