



Lake County, Ohio



Lake County Board of Commissioners

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PRESS RELEASE

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Lake County Launches Program To Assist with Rent and Utilities For Renters and Landlords Impacted by COVID-19

Earlier this year the Lake County Board of Commissioners accepted an allocation of \$6.8 M made available as a part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The United States Department of Treasury is the administering the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) and today the Commissioners entered into an agreement with partner agencies to get those funds where they are needed most.

Funds can be used in a variety of ways to help landlords and tenants maintain stability, maintain utility connections and prevent eviction. Eligible costs under the grant include rental arrears, current rent, future rent in three month qualifying periods, and the cost of major utilities, case management and administration. Program guidelines are based on detailed guidance that has been issued by Treasury over a sequence of FAQs that can be viewed online.

“Stable housing is part of the foundation for any household. Without it everything else is jeopardized. With these funds and the array of local partnerships within state, county, local government, courts, businesses and nonprofit organizations we can renew a sense of security for so many residents that were impacted by COVID 19,” said John R. Hamercheck, president of the Board of Lake County Commissioners. “The partner agencies noted in this agreement Lifeline, Inc. and Fair Housing Resource Center have years of experience doing what it takes to get and keep people in the housing they choose.”

“This is an investment in our community, in our Lake County,” said Commissioner Ron Young. He added, “Living here in Lake County, it is a great place to be and raise a family and have an opportunity to succeed. Some of our residents were economically or physically impacted by COVID 19. Let’s help our residents put those hard times behind them and help them stay in stable decent housing by using this fund. An unplanned move would only hamper our residents’ ability to get on with their work plans and their lives.”

Lake County has more than 102,000 housing units and approximately 24,000 are rented. Of those rental units, based on pre-Covid data half of the households would income qualify for this program. The maximum qualifying income level is 80% of Area Median Income which is \$50,350 for a two person household, with adjustments for more or fewer household members. With COVID there are additional households that may now qualify. Many may have never sought assistance previously and need the guidance offered by the skilled, caring staff at Lifeline, Inc. and Fair Housing Resource Center. The launch of the Lake County ERAP funds will capitalize on and allow expansion of the existing program that has been funded through the State of Ohio. That programming allowed the Lifeline, Inc., in partnership with the Fair Housing Resource Center to assist hundreds of households maintain their housing since November 2020. “Our partnership with FHRC has been invaluable. Before we launched the initial program back in November, their staff volunteered to partner with us to help expedite the triage and screening process and have continued to do so throughout,” said Carrie Dotson, Lifeline’s Executive Director. “Many of our clients are in crisis and getting personal attention from a real, live person and getting the assistance quickly is imperative. FHRC’s partnership has allowed us to keep the program very customer-centered and efficient. This has been a perfect example of how collaboration can and should work to meet the needs of our community.”

The Eviction Moratorium issued by the Center for Disease Control has allowed some tenants to stay in place but that is scheduled to expire on June 30th. Smaller landlords with only a few properties that are behind on rent may be feeling an impact. These funds may be used until September, 2022, but landlords and tenants are encouraged to reach out early.

Commissioner John Plecnik noted that “It’s very important to me to thank our staff and Program Manager Marian Norman for going above and beyond to bring nearly \$7 million in additional federal funding to Lake County. Because of their hard work we are able to support Lifeline and the Fair Housing Resource Center to jointly provide the Emergency Rental Assistance Program for those most in need.”

Marian Norman expressed her appreciation for having the opportunity through COVID to maintain awareness of emerging programs and developments across the nation and to position Lake County to make good choices to serve residents, landlords and utility companies.

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