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WISCAP URGES ENACTMENT of the WISCONSIN OPPORTUNITY ACT

Today at a briefing in the state Capitol, the Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) called on lawmakers to enact the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (SB 1045, AB 1145) in the State Legislature. The proposal, authored by Senator Jeff Smith and Representative Lisa Subeck and joined by 29 original co-sponsors, advances comprehensive legislation designed to aid communities in the fight against poverty. The bill proposes to do this through a renewed investment in housing, transportation, employment and business development training, and other services.

WISCAP sees this legislation as a necessary step to combat poverty statewide. The Institute for Research on Poverty has reported that more than 1 in 10 Wisconsinites live in poverty while, in 2021, the Department of Public Instruction identified over 17,000 homeless children and youth throughout the state. And, while unemployment remains low, housing costs have increased out of proportion to earnings. In fact, 302,200 people in 161,900 low-income households pay more than half their income for housing.

Community action agencies and their local partners throughout Wisconsin provide a wide range of programs and services that help individuals and families respond to crisis as well as achieve lasting economic security and self-sufficiency. If passed, this bill would help expand such outcomes. According to WISCAP Executive Director Brad Paul, “Whether we consider the impact of COVID-19, rising housing costs, or lagging wages, both metro and small-town Wisconsin continue to face significant challenges and stress. Senator Smith and Representative Subeck are keenly aware of how poverty reveals itself in our communities and have offered an important response.”

If you would like more information on the proposed legislation or to schedule an interview, please contact Gary Goyke, Legislative Consultant, (608) 219-5237