



*Contact* Kassidy Berens, Communications  
Manager  
*Telephone* 608-244-4422  
*Email* kberens@wiscap.org  
*Website* Wiscap.org

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## **WISCAP URGES PASSAGE of the WISCONSIN OPPORTUNITY ACT**

The Wisconsin Community Action Program Association (WISCAP) applauds the introduction of the Wisconsin Opportunity Act (LRB 0891), comprehensive legislation designed to aid communities in the fight against poverty. The proposal, authored by Senator LaTonya Johnson, calls for a renewed investment in housing, transportation, employment training, and other services tailored to the unique needs of local communities, urban, suburban and rural alike.

WISCAP sees this legislation as a necessary step to combat poverty statewide. The Institute for Research on Poverty reports that more than 1 in 10 Wisconsinites live in poverty, with the elderly representing the fastest growing segment of the population. In 2018, the Department of Public Instruction identified more than 19,000 homeless children and youth throughout the state. And, while unemployment remains low, housing costs have increased out of proportion to earnings. In fact, 306,000 low-income Wisconsin renters 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 impacts of lagging wages, rising housing costs, the opioid crisis, or the downturn in the farm economy, both metro and small-town Wisconsin continue to face significant challenges and stress, even as major economic indicators are largely healthy. This Act would help give local communities additional resources and the flexibility necessary to serve low-income households in a way that is appropriate and responsive to Wisconsin’s diverse needs.”

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