

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: September 9, 2021

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: A report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, requesting an emergency American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) allocation of \$1.5 million for the creation of an emergency flexible housing subsidy pool

File Type: Action Report

---

**REQUEST**

The Director, Department of Health and Human Services, is requesting an allocation of \$1.5 million in ARPA funds for the creation of an Emergency Flexible Rental Assistance Pool.

**POLICY**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to highlight how critical stable housing is to our county residents. Safe and stable housing provides a place to socialize, eat, rest, and teach our children who may be unable to attend in person schooling. The pandemic has also highlighted how many residents have been on the brink of being evicted or simply lose their informal living arrangement.

Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) in 2020, the County was awarded funding to support much needed emergency rental assistance. Through the federal Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program, this financial assistance has been extended. While this reservoir of aid has provided for thousands of individuals and families this year, significant housing needs remain in our community. Current guidelines for the emergency rental assistance are targeted at households that hold leases. It does not address individuals and families who are literally homeless or precariously housed (staying with friends or family, couch surfing). As a result, residents who fall into this category are unable to maintain housing.

For this reason, the DHHS Housing Division is requesting an allocation from the county's ARPA award to address the pressing needs of housing unstable individuals and families. The funding would be used to maximize contributions already pledged to provide immediate and flexible rental assistance to those facing homelessness and are in emergency situations.

## **BACKGROUND**

The \$1.5 million emergency allocation would provide a flexible housing subsidy to address residents in need of emergency assistance. These groups would include individuals or families dealing with literal homelessness (on the street or in an emergency shelter or safe haven) or precariously housed individuals and families who do not have a lease and are at-risk of becoming homeless. Currently, neither of these populations are eligible for emergency rental assistance through current funding. These individuals and families will stay homeless or become homeless without a flexible subsidy.

An increase in flexible rental assistance for those who are currently homeless has become more important during the pandemic. Homeless shelters in Milwaukee County continue to be at reduced capacity to ensure a level of social distancing and the hotel rooms that the community has used very successfully are currently at capacity.

DHHS Housing Division plans to partner with United Way to form a public/private partnership. Funding from United Way will allow for potential sustainability of the flexible subsidy pool. Through detailed program evaluation, the Housing Division believes that Milwaukee County can attract future dedicated funding from private sources to continue this work into the future.

The DHHS Housing Division presented this item (File 21-295) to the Milwaukee County ARPA Task Force and on Sept. 2, 2021, the Task Force recommended the allocation of \$1.5 million for consideration by the County Board. In addition, the Task Force requested that the community support criteria used to determine a project's eligibility for ARPA funding be included in this report to the County Board. This information is included as an attachment to this file.

Related File No's:	21-295
--------------------	--------

## **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

This request aligns with the goal of Milwaukee County looking at services through a racial equity lens. Homelessness and housing stability disproportionately affect African-American Milwaukeeans who comprise 70 percent of the County's homeless population while being only 24.6 percent of the County's overall population.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors authorize the allocation of \$1.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for the creation of an Emergency Flexible Rental Assistance Pool within the DHHS Housing Division. It is further recommended that the Milwaukee County Board authorize the Department of Administrative Services, Office of Performance Strategy and Budget (DAS-PSB) and Office of the Comptroller execute an

appropriation transfer of \$300,000 in 2021 and \$1,200,000 in 2022 for a total of \$1,500,000 in ARPA funding.

**FISCAL EFFECT**

This request has no tax levy impact and would be funded through Milwaukee County's ARPA allocation.

**TERMS**

N/A

**VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

[Shakita.LaGrant@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Shakita.LaGrant@milwaukeecountywi.gov)  
[James.Mathy@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:James.Mathy@milwaukeecountywi.gov)  
[Eric.Collins-Dkye@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Eric.Collins-Dkye@milwaukeecountywi.gov)  
[Krystina Kohler kkohler@unitedwaygmwc.org](mailto:Krystina.Kohler@unitedwaygmwc.org)

**PREPARED BY:**

James Mathy, Administrator, Department of Health & Human Services – Housing Division

**APPROVED BY:**

*Shakita LaGrant-McClain*

Shakita LaGrant-McClain, Director, Department of Health & Human Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1 - Community Support Criteria

cc: County Executive David Crowley  
Sup. Felesia Martin, Chair, Health Equity, Human Needs, Strategic Planning Committee  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive's Office  
Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director – Comptroller's Office  
Allyson Smith, Committee Coordinator, Office of the County Clerk  
Pam Matthews, Budget Analyst – DAS  
Lottie Maxwell-Mitchell, Research & Policy Analyst, Comptroller's Office