



## Congressional Roundtable: 27 June 2023

A lot of the issues raised today are important measures of success or failure in Idaho. Homelessness is one of those measures.

- **Sadly, the numbers continue to increase over the past few years.**
  - We have lots of measures
    - Provider measures
    - School district measures
    - PIT Counts
  - All are increasing. In Idaho (and on a national level)—some categories are exceeding the escalating trend lines:
    - the elderly
    - the medically fragile and disabled
    - those repeated episodes and extended periods of homelessness—this is another indicator of how entrenched the mismatch between housing costs and wages (as over 40% of those unhoused are working poor).
  
- At a community level, increased unhoused numbers are very easy to correlate—to
  - **lack of affordable housing**
  - **wages that have not escalated with housing costs**
  - **limited resources**
  
- The importance of allocating resources is truly critical
  - Everyone's **end goal to secure permanent housing**...usually, supportive housing to ensure success
  - the **avg. wait time** for housing for a homeless household is almost 450 days, and the delay in itself intensifies and calcifies the negative impacts to individuals, families, and our communities at large
  - **Because of the impossible wait times for long term housing, short term shelter facilities are critical**—and not just safe spaces for shelter, but with programs that allow residents to continue progress in their lives, their jobs, their children's education
  - **Every day we delay addressing the problem in a comprehensive way, exponentially increases the negative community impact and future costs.**
  
- **SO—here is my resource needs shortlist:**

- **more affordable housing stock**—since the current market rates of land and construction completely precludes affordability (in all Idaho markets), we must have programs that support the cost—additional vouchers, land trusts, investment supports
- **eviction prevention**—it is far less expensive to keep a family IN their home than to endure the disruption to schools, jobs, health PLUS the expense of rehousing them. You heard from Sen. Rabe. We know how to do this...and the demonstration of what works—and it works for tenants AND for landlords:
  - early intervention
  - mediation—repayment plans, S.T. rental assistance when a family can maintain their home, and vacating without eviction if they cannot.
  - right to representation
  - a stabilization fund to bridge emergency situations
  - ongoing education programs for landlords, the courts, and tenants
- **Mental physical health care/options**
  - keep people healthy as much as possible—people WANT to be employed with control over their lives!
  - assisted living support for those who are medically fragile

**Close:**

**Our pandemic experience has emphasized both needs and solutions—it has been intensive research into what works:**

- the good news is that we are seeing some states and cities who have conquered Veterans’ homelessness. Their strategies are working...and they provide a framework.
- the other good news is that this isn’t just Idaho’s problem—It is a national problem, and will require large scale efforts to maintain the quality and stability of our lives.