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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**COLUMBUS REGION LEADERS INTRODUCE NEW ACTION  
ON HOMELESSNESS**  
***Funding for programs and services introduced as data shows  
increase in homeless count***

Central Ohio leaders today introduced new actions and funding to address a regional rise in homelessness. Funding announced today includes new federal Emergency Rental Assistance awarded to the City of Columbus and Franklin County, funding for housing resource specialists embedded in nonprofit organizations, and a community assessment to analyze economic and demographic changes affecting the community's response to homelessness.

Commitments were announced as Community Shelter Board and Continuum of Care partners joined together to share results of the 2023 count of the number of people experiencing homelessness at a single point in time. The January 25 count identified 2,337 people experiencing homelessness on that date, up 22% from 1,912 in January 2022. The count identified 1,839 people staying in shelter or transitional housing (+17% from 1,570 in 2022) and 498 living outside or in other spaces not meant for habitation (+46% from 342 in 2022). With \$61 million spent across the Columbus and Franklin County Continuum of Care in FY2022, the need continues to increase.

“The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the regional housing shortage are driving numbers in the wrong direction,” said Shannon Isom, President and CEO of Community Shelter Board. “Homelessness, specifically unsheltered homelessness, is a serious and growing problem in many American cities, although very few Midwest cities. This is an opportunity to ensure that our response reflects what we believe – everyone should have a place to call home. We are taking action now as a region to avoid an irreversible problem.”

Funding announced today includes \$68 million awarded to the City of Columbus and \$52 million awarded to Franklin County in the U.S. Treasury's latest reallocation of Emergency Rental Assistance funding. The City of Columbus will allocate:

- \$25 million for rent and utility assistance for low-income households, including households throughout the Columbus MSA. The City will partner with non-profit organizations, including agencies serving New Americans, refugees and pregnant mothers, in an effort to reach our most vulnerable and underserved residents. \$900,000 of this funding will fund an Emergency Rehousing Resource fund that will provide immediate assistance to

households involuntarily displaced due to property owner negligence.

- \$3.5 million will be utilized for housing resource specialists embedded in nonprofit organizations to assist individuals as they navigate the housing process.

“Homelessness is a housing issue,” said Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther. “The chronic under-building of housing in our region is expected to drive 150 new people into homelessness every year that we continue on our current housing trajectory. It’s unacceptable. I’m proud to share our city’s resources with residents throughout the region and call on partners throughout our region to join us in stemming this tide together.”

As property values rose from 2017 to 2021, Franklin County lost 38,000 apartments that used to rent for less than \$900 a month. Today, Central Ohio has a deficit of 51,000 units for renters making minimum wage; there are just 30 available and affordable homes for every 100 residents seeking attainable housing.

“Affordable housing is the greatest challenge facing our community today. Franklin County is growing by leaps and bounds, but we won’t be successful until all of our residents are able to share in that success,” said Franklin County Board of Commissioners President John O’Grady. “The county commissioners allocated more than \$50 million to homelessness and affordable housing issues last year. Even with these and similar investments from other local governments, though, there just aren’t enough places for Franklin County families to live. We are committed to working with our community partners throughout Central Ohio to continue to address this issue by both creating new housing and helping families stay in the homes they have.”

“The nonprofit sector in central Ohio has been working 24/7, 365 days a year to keep people stable in their housing”, said Michael Wilkos, Chair of the Continuum of Care and Senior Vice President of United Way of Central Ohio. “The hard work of these nonprofits is not enough to overcorrect the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic increase in housing costs for many of our most vulnerable residents. Across the country, there have been huge increases in people experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered. While we are not immune to the same issue, we have a window of opportunity to solve our region’s homeless crisis before it is irreversible. Central Ohio has been under building housing since 2010. In the last six years alone rents in central Ohio for a two-bedroom apartment have jumped 56%. We must build more housing across our region in order to avoid what almost every growing major American city is experiencing: housing costs are far outstripping wages burdening people with having to make choices between rent, food, and medicine. If we want a strong region, we must have a housing system that works for all.”

“At Home for Families, we see the devastating effects of homelessness on parents and children”, said Beth Fetzer-Rice, President/CEO of Home for Families. “In addition to the rising number of new families experiencing

homelessness, we now are also seeing an alarming trend of stabilized families being displaced and returning to crisis. Our families are not being evicted, rather landlords are not renewing their lease, stating they are making renovations and then raising the price of rent. It is heartbreaking to see families who have worked so hard lose their housing and have to start the process all over again.”

“The demand for affordable housing throughout Central Ohio continues to increase as more residents are impacted by the rising cost of living and a low available housing inventory”, said Lark Mallory, President & CEO of the Affordable Housing Trust for Columbus and Franklin County. “This is a critical time in which we must come together across our region to develop and invest in innovative solutions to tackle this crisis. The numbers being released today tell us that our neighbors and families are spending more time in shelters because of a lack of units. AHT stands with our colleagues, ready to assist, in bringing more units online to relieve some of the burden on our shelter system.”

"As part of our Regional Housing Strategy released in 2020, we learned that too many of our residents are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing," said William Murdock, Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. “No one should have to be faced with the decision of which basic needs they can afford each month. We applaud Columbus and Franklin County for putting dollars towards rent, utility, and relocation assistance, and are thankful for our non-profits working to provide a warm space or meal for our most vulnerable residents and families. At MORPC, we are committed to continuing to work with our partners across all sectors to find innovative ways to build more and create better access to housing."

To further address regional challenges, Community Shelter Board is sponsoring a comprehensive [community assessment](#), with support from the City of Columbus, Franklin County and the Columbus Partnership. The assessment will analyze economic and demographic changes affecting our community’s response to homelessness and the housing market in Central Ohio to identify recommendations tailored to our community.

### **ABOUT THE POINT IN TIME COUNT**

Counts of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness are bound to be limited and incomplete. It is not possible to find every single person across the entire county who is unsheltered at a single point-in-time. Several critical factors are relevant when examining point-in-time count numbers in 2023 and the prior two years.

- Additional shelter beds were open during the January 2023 count, including two overnight winter warming centers. This made it easier to count people who otherwise may have been outside.
- The January 2022 count was impacted by extreme weather conditions and the COVID-19 Omicron variant, which resulted in fewer volunteers available on count day.
- An unsheltered count was not conducted in January 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. Department of HUD exempted

communities from conducting counts in the interest of client and volunteer safety.

Despite these factors, the significant increase in the number of people counted as homeless at a single point in time reveals an alarming trend, and one that is unsustainable if repeated.

The homeless count is an important method to better understand the extent of homelessness in Columbus and Franklin County. Communities across the nation conduct counts at the end of January, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, to track progress toward reducing homelessness, to better understand who experiences homelessness and their service and housing needs, and to inform the federal budget.

### **ABOUT COMMUNITY SHELTER BOARD**

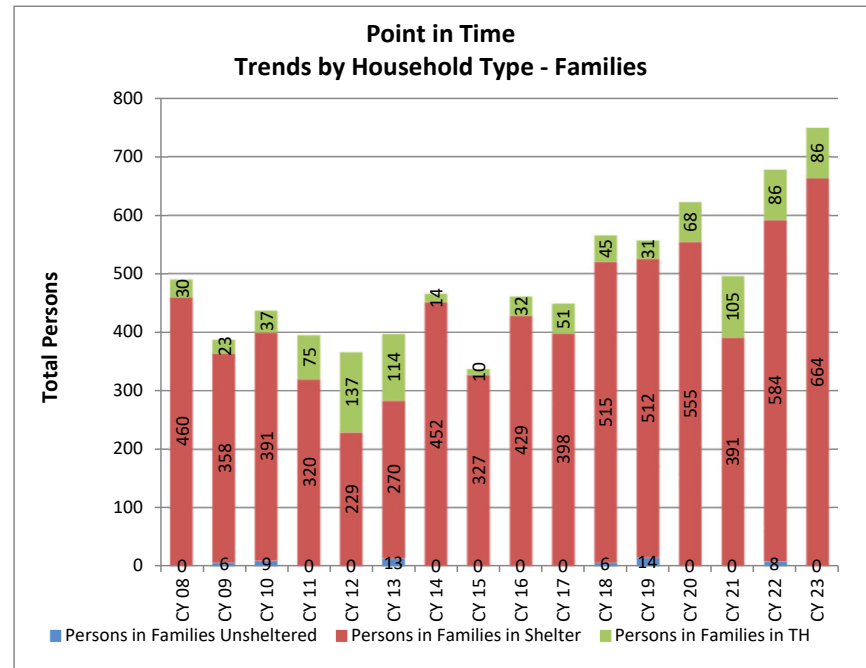
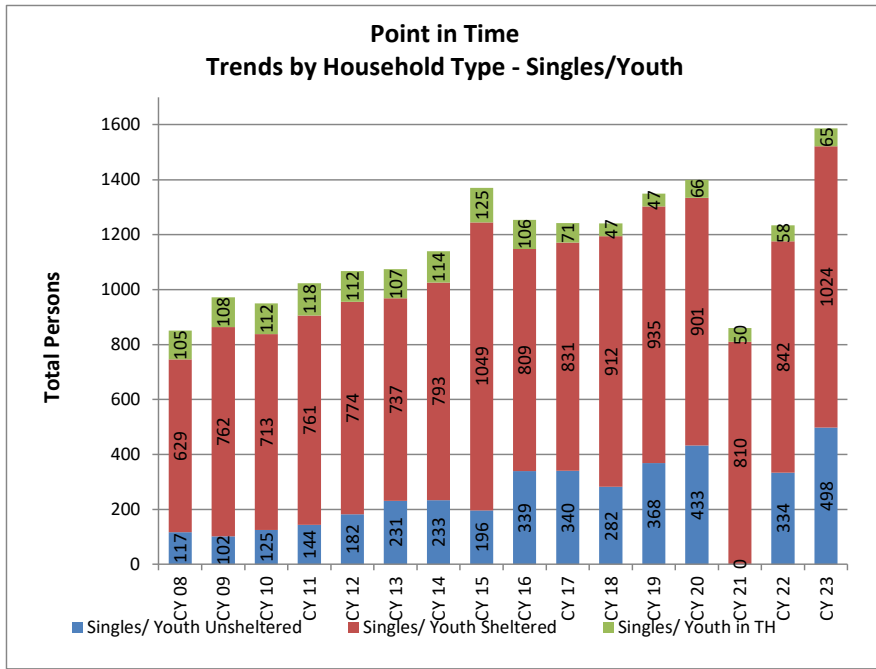
Community Shelter Board (CSB) leads a coordinated, community effort to make sure everyone has a place to call home in Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio. As the system leader for the prevention and response to homelessness in central Ohio, CSB brings together service provider organizations in Franklin County, driving collaboration for the most efficient, strategic, and effective use of community resources to assure that people experiencing homelessness can quickly regain housing stability. CSB ensures strategic strengthening, building capacity, ensuring accountability, monitoring and compliance, and driving coordinated outcomes to achieve best practice systemic results for people facing homelessness.

Community Shelter Board is funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the State of Ohio, United Way of Central Ohio, Nationwide Foundation, American Electric Power Foundation, The Columbus Foundation, and many other public and private investors.

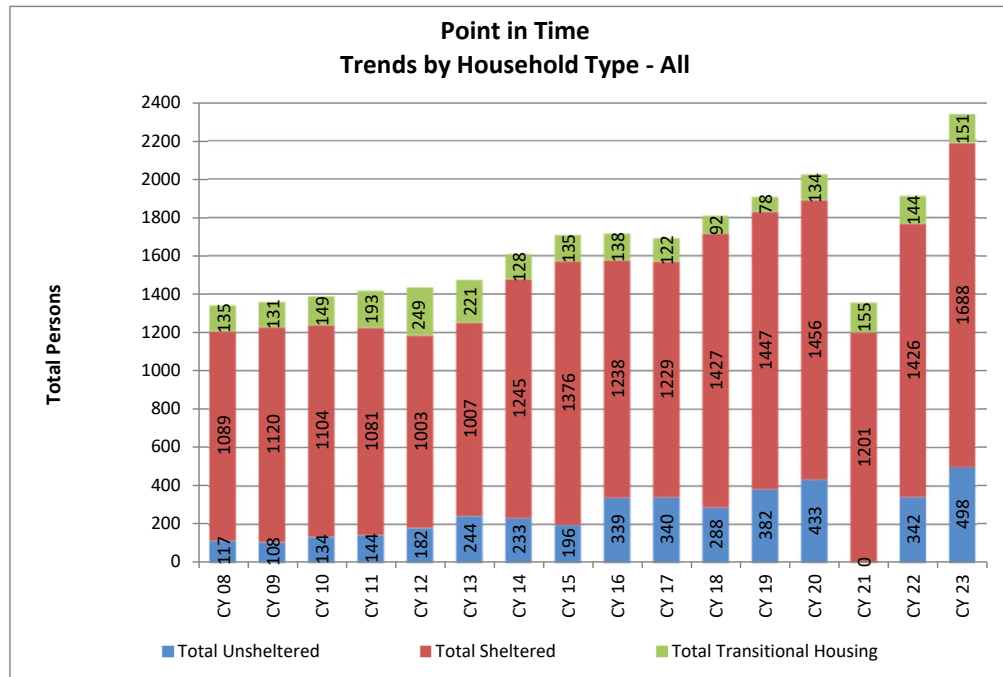
### **ABOUT THE CONTINUUM OF CARE**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development requires that each community across the United States have a governing body made up of representatives of relevant stakeholders. The Continuum of Care is charged with overseeing the homeless system and includes representation by non-profit organizations, government, school districts, mental health agencies, hospitals, law enforcement, and many other stakeholders. Community Shelter Board convenes the [Continuum of Care in Columbus and Franklin County](#).

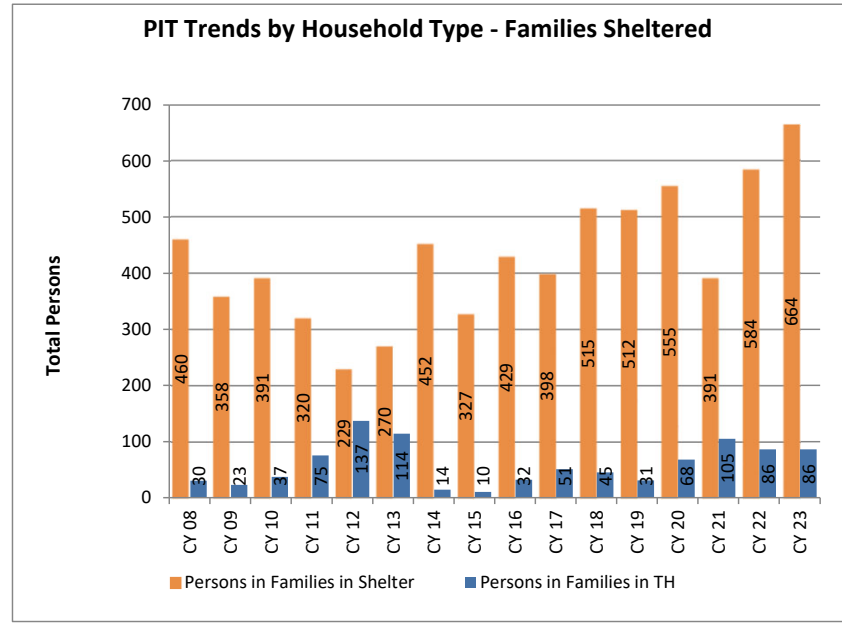
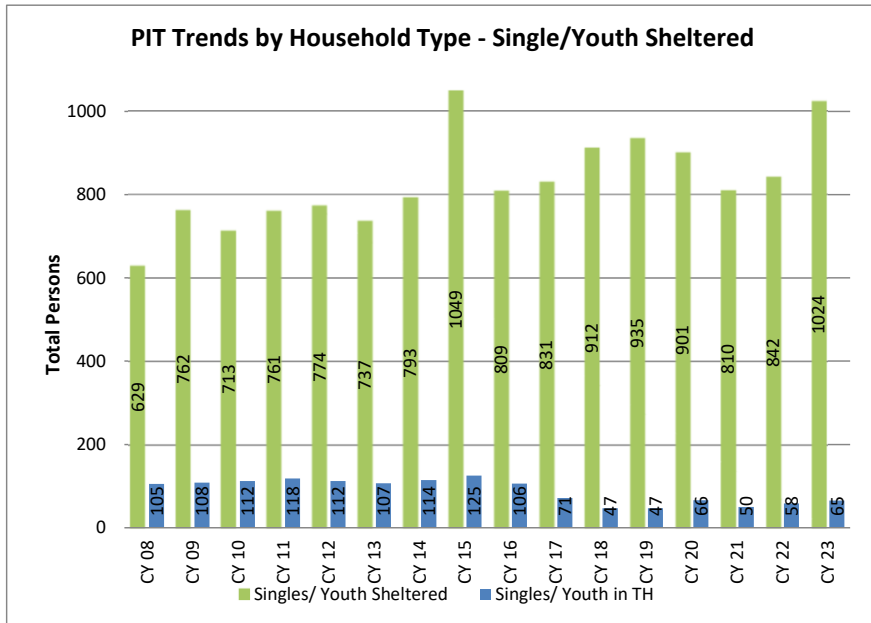
**POINT IN TIME  
2008 - 2023**



The unsheltered count was NOT conducted in 2021, due to COVID19



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