



pathfinders  
Empowering Youth. Changing Lives.

ChangeMakers Issue Brief

# The Power of Communicating with Your Legislators



## Youth & Young Adult Homelessness is All Around Us

Nearly 12,000 young people aged 10 to 24 experience homelessness in Milwaukee County each year. This could look like street homelessness, couch surfing, sleeping in a car, or sleeping somewhere not meant for human habitation. It could also look like trading sex for a place to stay.

Homelessness disproportionately impacts BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth; those living in poverty and those with disabilities. Experience with child welfare and youth justice systems adds additional levels of vulnerability.

**Homelessness places young people at high risk of sexual exploitation, mental health crisis and trauma. One in five homeless young women and one in ten homeless young men surveyed had been trafficked for sex, with even higher rates among LGBTQ+ youth.**

Because of their extreme vulnerability, unhoused young people work hard to blend in. Consequently, they are often undercounted among people experiencing homelessness and fewer resources are directed their way.

## The Solution? More Housing & More Awareness

Right now, there simply aren't enough resources to help unhoused young people, and some proposed laws are actively trying to punish people experiencing homelessness.

More housing support will decrease the impact on and cost to health care, law enforcement and mental health systems. Providing more resources for those who are on the verge of homelessness costs much less and is more effective at helping people stabilize than these other systems.

Experiencing homelessness as a young person is highly correlated with lifelong housing instability. By addressing youth homelessness now, we are preventing what could be lifetimes of housing instability for people in our community.

## Our Legislators Need to Hear from Us

**We all have power with local, state and national leaders. Our legislators hear very little from constituents on any issue. When they receive a handful of phone calls and emails, it can move them to action.**

As a ChangeMaker, you raise awareness about an issue impacting generations of our community's young people. Together, we have the power to make a difference. Together, we can ensure more young people can move from surviving to thriving.