



Kansas Statewide
Homeless Coalition

2024 Survey for Kansas Public Leaders and Candidates

Name

Matthew Kleinmann

Office:

United States House of Representatives

Party

Democrat

District

Second

Home City

Kansas City, Kansas

Ballot City

Kansas City, Kansas

Policy and Strategy:

Kansas Housing Resource Corporation's 2021 Housing Needs Assessment found that "A shortage of quality, affordable housing is an undeniable barrier to economic growth and development in any community, and particularly in rural communities in Kansas." How likely are you to support increasing funding for affordable housing development?

Very Likely

Comments:

I've heard from residents across the district that affordable housing is becoming increasingly unattainable. Talking with community developers in Humboldt, existing homes can go for as little as \$30k, with another \$30k in renovations, but those are few and far between. Meanwhile, new construction can't be built for under \$200k, making affordable housing in their community difficult to provide. This has led to good-paying jobs going to people from outside their community, preventing their town of 1,800 from growing. In Wyandotte County, where I live, this issue is further exacerbated by high rates of poverty. Our local government doesn't have the resources to provide for affordable housing or a homeless shelter, and without federal investments, we're at risk of losing affordable housing altogether. That's why I'm running for Congress: my political platform is based on bringing more investments back to the second congressional district of Kansas for affordable housing and access to care.

Inadequate access to mental health and substance use treatment programs contributes to homelessness in Kansas. How likely are you to vote to expand mental health and substance abuse treatment programs?

Very Likely

Comments:

Very likely. We

How likely are you to be in favor of limiting annual rental increases?

Likely

Comments:

Rent control—in whatever format is acceptable to a local community—is one of the tools at our disposal to prevent runaway prices in communities. This is important because it can prevent economic displacement, which has a ripple effect in communities where they lose the social relationships that keep them healthy. I support limits on annual rent increases. However, they must be tied to incentives. I've participated in past Safe & Affordable Housing Task Force meetings as part of the Wyandotte CHIP and have heard firsthand that there are landlords who believe they can't maintain safe and affordable housing without making enough to reinvest back into the units and make a profit. Until housing is nationally considered to be a basic human right, we must work with the system to incrementally improve it so that more people can attain safe and secure housing.

Kansas has no statewide plan that comprehensively addresses homelessness. How likely are you to support the implementation of a statewide affordable housing plan to address homelessness?

Very Likely

Comments:

I am committed to this work and have been supportive of this through my past leadership in the Wyandotte County Health Equity Task Force. We've presented the case for 'Housing is Healthcare', and I believe our state has the expertise and knowledge to address homelessness. We lack the political and financial capital to do so. I would champion any proposal that puts forth permanent supportive housing to address homelessness at the root cause and take a holistic approach to addressing the whole person.

How likely are you to advocate to allow for more affordable housing developments in urban and suburban areas?

Very Likely

Comments:

Mixed-income housing is a major step towards economic equality, as research has shown that communities with ties beyond their socioeconomic status are healthier and stronger than being isolated in poverty. While everyone may not need affordable housing right now, everyone needs it at some point and has a relative or friend who needs it now. Getting past NIMBY-ism is a challenge, but incremental development shows promise as one method (among many) to spread affordable housing throughout a community and not concentrate on one area such that local opposition becomes too overwhelming. I also think we can't build our way out of our housing crisis, so we must find more pathways to building affordable housing that doesn't solely rely on HUD assistance because not every community has a CHDO, and no one CHDO can do all the work that is needed.

How likely are you to be in favor of establishing a state-funded rental assistance program to stabilize low-income renters and support property owners?

Very Likely

Comments:

I support federal legislation that helps low-income renters and property owners simultaneously, a compromise similar to the Farm Bill. Whether through the states or HUD, I think more federal incentives are needed, especially for working families and seniors on fixed incomes.

How likely are you to support legislation or programs to provide legal assistance to tenants facing eviction?

Very Likely

Comments:

Research has shown us that people who are evicted face serious health complications as they lose their social networks and stability through forced displacement. Tenant unions and legal aid clinics represent an evolution of our social safety net, as they directly support those who are most vulnerable. It does our society no good to further burden taxpayers with additional costs to help rehouse families--and all the complications they experience after eviction--when we would all be better off economically if we supported people who needed temporary assistance to maintain their housing situation.

How likely are you to support increasing funding for domestic violence shelters and services to prevent homelessness?

Very Likely

Comments:

I have worked with frontline staff at organizations in Wyandotte County, including Cross-Lines and Friends of Yates. I know from interviews I've done with community leaders in KCK that finding affordable housing for mothers leaving domestic abuse situations is one of the hardest challenges they have. I also know that the number of families in our McKinney-Vento program is too high, and we need more federal assistance for families that are just trying to survive.

What funding sources will you prioritize or advocate for to support homelessness programs and services? (Check all that apply)

Federal grants and programs (e.g., HUD Continuum of Care, Emergency Solutions Grants)

State Government funding initiatives

Local government budgets and funding allocations

Private donations and philanthropic foundations

Corporate partnerships and sponsorships

Community fundraising events and campaigns

Social impact bonds and other innovative financing mechanisms

Public-private partnerships

Tax revenue initiatives (e.g., bonds, levies specifically for housing and homeless services)

Comments:

Whenever we are faced with a wicked problem, there's never a silver bullet; rather, it's silver buckshot. Each approach can work in different parts of the district I'm running to represent. In Pittsburg, they're pursuing federal grants. In Humboldt, they have local businesses that could partner with their community. Healthcare foundations are moving deeper into housing assistance in Kansas City, Kansas. All of these are possible options to arrive at functionally zero homelessness (less people entering homelessness than leaving it). It takes a village.

Housing Solutions

Kansas does not have enough shelter space; nearly two thousand Kansans sleep outside or in their cars in dangerous weather conditions. How important is it to increase funding and capacity for emergency shelters to meet immediate needs?

Very Important

Comments:

In my community of Kansas City, Kansas, we only have a cold-weather shelter. As a result, our street medicine team does it's best to meet people where they are, but the taxpayer burden of emergency services to respond to medical emergencies among the homeless population would be far better invested in permanent supportive housing and shelters to get people off the streets and on the road to recovery.

How important is it to develop more transitional housing programs to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing?

Very Important

Comments:

It's important not only to develop more programs but to ensure we're catering to the diversity of people experiencing homelessness. There are people in my community who--for whatever reason--can't find transitional housing programs due to various rules and regulations implemented for good reasons but functionally prevent certain people from finding housing. Bridging that gap means a user-centered approach to ensure people aren't being unfairly limited on what resources they can access.

How important is it to expand permanent supportive housing options with integrated services for long-term stability?

Very Important

Comments:

It is 100% important. As a Congressman, I'd also be a strong advocate to pass legislation that would push back on the efforts to criminalize homelessness by running over home rule in states. There is a concerted attack on PSH that uses misinformation to pass state laws that prevent federal assistance from reaching municipal governments. I support challenges to the constitutionality of those laws and would work to pass legislation that pre-empts them.

How important is it to implement a low barrier approach that prioritizes permanent housing with support services?

Very Important

Comments:

For individuals experiencing homelessness, we have done them a disservice by creating a network of agencies that require a car to get to and the patience to navigate bureaucratic systems. I would support federal incentives that complement existing wraparound structures where food, housing, healthcare, and legal issues could be addressed in one facility. The best example of this I am familiar with is the Beehive in KCMO, which the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness (which I've worked with) offices out of. We must make the resources we provide more accessible, not just in proximity but also in language and with better educational awareness.

How important is it to collaborate on the local level to ensure a coordinated response that addresses homelessness?

Very Important

Comments:

None of these issues can be addressed in a silo. We must all work together across jurisdictions, territories, organizations, and domains to find and share what resources we have. It's like the stone soup parable: it just takes one organization to start stirring the pot for others to throw in what they have. But this means we must encourage collaboration in our federal grants rather than competition and pass laws that instruct federal agencies to incentivize partnerships in this space.

How important is it to use data-driven strategies to allocate resources based on current demand and long-term outcomes?

Very Important

Comments:

In my past work in public health and with community organizing, I like to say I am 'evidence-based and community-led.' We don't know what we don't know, and sometimes, people who exist on the margins of society can slip through the cracks. However, better data collection can highlight disparities in care, which can be used to prioritize where we invest our resources to be more equitable. Strategies that are absent data are doomed to repeat past mistakes and continue to fail those who they do not reach.

How important is it to create a flexible funding source that allows communities to address local needs?

Important

Comments:

It is important, but there is something to be said for specificity. For example, as the COVID pandemic was winding down in Kansas City, Kansas, I saw how multiple departments, agencies, and organizations sought to use ARPA dollars for non-permitted uses. Because federal law clearly defined what was permissible, the local government could better steward the resources it had received. Flexibility is possible through a framework that maintains clear guidelines and structures for accountability. As someone who has benefitted from flexibility in federal grants in my past work, I think the best approach is a 'both and' one where minimum expectations are set and can be achieved while permitting future milestones that give applicants the flexibility to innovate and report back on what they learn.

Collaboration and Partnerships:

Will you establish regular communication channels with local nonprofits to address homelessness?

Yes

Comments:

Yes, I already have that communication in Wyandotte County with groups like Care Beyond the Boulevard and Cross-Lines Community Outreach, and my first stop on my campaign was to the Wesley House in Pittsburg, Kansas. r

Do you plan to participate in a workgroup or advisory council that addresses homelessness that includes representatives from key stakeholders throughout Kansas?

Yes

Comments:

I've already been engaged in that work in KCK through the Greater Kansas City Coalition to End Homelessness, where I represented my employer, Vibrant Health, an FQHC. I look forward to taking a larger role as a Congressman to support those networks across the state.

How important is it for state entities to collaborate on homelessness initiatives?

Important

Comments:

State collaboration is helpful, no doubt. But from my experience, the best collaboration isn't horizontal but vertical. Learning about what works in other areas is critical. However, as a principle, people closest to the

problems should be closest to the solution. In my past work I've created advisory councils to ensure local voices are being heard on key issues, and I'd look for opportunities to make sure people with lived experiences are allowed to review and provide recommendations on proposed initiatives.

Employment and Education:

How likely are you to be in favor of creating state incentives for businesses that hire individuals experiencing homelessness?

Likely

Comments:

This sounds like a good idea. I need more information on what the details would look like, and that's a critical component. I'd also be interested in what incentives, if any, support the employee simultaneously.

Will you support job training and vocational programs tailored to the needs of homeless individuals?

Yes

Comments:

Yes, we can also do that in different settings, including with returning citizens and school-based programs.

Do you support the creation of a statewide initiative to simplify the process of obtaining a state ID for homeless and low-income individuals?

Yes

Comments:

In Wyandotte County, this is critical for our unhoused and people without the proper documentation. Everyone should have at least a municipal ID so that they can better access the resources our society can provide them with.

Health and Well-being:

Do you advocate for Medicaid expansion to increase healthcare coverage for low-income individuals?

Yes

Comments:

Yes. It's a tragedy that has not happened yet in Kansas, but I will keep speaking up about it and will do my part at a federal level to explore other ways to increase the affordability of healthcare.

How critical is Medicaid expansion for increasing healthcare coverage for low-income individuals in your view?

Very Critical

Comments:

Tens of thousands of Kansans fall into the Medicaid coverage gap. I would fight to close that gap using my influence to help the State Legislature pass Medicaid Expansion. I work for an FQHC in KCK, so I know firsthand how critical access to care is not just for the uninsured and underinsured but also for our healthcare providers who need Medicaid Expansion to stay open.

Will you support the integration of healthcare services within shelters and housing programs?

Yes

Comments:

Yes. My goal is to promote access to care through holistic wraparound services. It's a challenge, given the current landscape. However, I would seek to champion federal investments in establishing anchor healthcare centers to provide wraparound services, including housing, for vulnerable patients. Politically, I think we can pilot that with maternal housing legislation to ensure that no new mother is homeless in our country. With time to measure its impact, we can expand it so that every hospital uses a portion of its Community Benefits, as required by the IRS, to provide housing to the most vulnerable in their community and allow Medicaid and Medicare to help pay for it. We have a lot of work to do to get there, but I'm committed to making a difference and supporting all Kansans.