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## **New Housing Innovation to Help Local Workers Grow Income, Recover from COVID-19**

Columbus, OH - (September 23, 2021) - A local collaboration will launch a new program this fall to provide housing assistance, wrap-around supports, and workforce education to help low-wage workers move into high-demand career fields.

The Resiliency Bridge pilot program will serve 60 families, which will be selected exclusively through referrals from partnering organizations. The program provides low- and extremely-low income households earning between 30 and 60 percent of the area median income career training in high-paying sectors. This will enable them to earn at least \$19.83 per hour upon graduation, which is the income currently needed to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment in Franklin County according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) "[Out of Reach](#)" report. All participants are expected to grow their income by at least 75 percent after completing the year-and-a-half long program.

In addition to affordable housing and no-cost career education, enrollees will receive personalized supports like family counseling, transportation assistance, reliable internet access, childcare, and food security by aligning the program with other social service systems.

The Resiliency Bridge initiative is a public-private partnership between local leaders, including the Homeless Families Foundation, Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, Community Shelter Board, the Mid-Ohio Food Collective, Columbus State Community College, ColumbusWorks, the Columbus Partnership, Habitat for Humanity Mid-Ohio, Homeport, Impact Community Action, the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio, and Action for Children.

"For low-wage workers to build a stable career and achieve financial independence, they need employment credentials in high-mobility fields, but too many families lack the housing security needed to access those training programs," said Lisa Patt-McDaniel, CEO of the Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio, who is providing education and career services to Resiliency Bridge participants. "No one should have to risk homelessness just to get a stable job, and this pilot will show the connection between stable housing and economic mobility."

JPMorgan Chase provided philanthropic support to help develop this groundbreaking intervention that is responsive to Franklin County's workforce and housing needs, yet replicable across the country.

"Access to safe, affordable housing is a leading determinant of income, wealth, health and overall quality of life," said Brandon Nelson, Columbus Market Executive for Middle Market Banking and Specialized Industries at JPMorgan Chase. "Yet for many people, especially



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those from underrepresented communities, access to stable, affordable housing and homeownership in neighborhoods that offer good-quality jobs, schools and critical resources is increasingly out of reach. The Resiliency Bridge initiative takes a comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges, and JPMorgan Chase is proud to work alongside these partners to make a meaningful impact on this issue here in Central Ohio.”

“We know that the impact of COVID-19 will be felt in many of our households for a long time to come,” said Board of Commissioners President Kevin L. Boyce. “The Resiliency Bridge program tackles the challenges made clear by the pandemic while continuing to follow the Rise Together Blueprint to make the long-term investments necessary to help all our neighbors recover and thrive.”

“COVID-19 was a wake-up call. The nature of our workforce is changing, jobs that used to provide a living wage can no longer support a family. At the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, we need to get ahead of that curve to avoid overwhelming an already fraying affordable housing system,” said Charles D. Hillman, President & CEO of the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, a partner and an investor in the project. “Education is the path to prosperity, and we are proud to stand with partners who understand how integral housing stability is to that journey.”

The Homeless Families Foundation will oversee housing and supportive services delivery for Resiliency Bridge applicants. “This is a mission project for us. We believe in creating a nurturing, family-centered environment that blends housing stability with supportive services, that’s exactly what Resiliency Bridge does,” said Beth Fetzer-Rice, executive director at the Homeless Families Foundation.

The unique program was created with support from the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio using a human-centered design process that ensured the voice of the community was prioritized throughout the program’s development. “We were privileged to work with a team of local residents who know from firsthand experience how hard it is to advance in your career and provide for your family while struggling with housing costs. They made sure that Resiliency Bridge is a significant and impactful program,” said Carlie J. Boos, executive director of the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio.

“I am so glad to be a part of this opportunity and see that I helped create something and turn it into a reality. Made it bigger than what it was before,” said Kartier Hinton, a local community member who helped design the program. “I realized we all need to come together as one, and push each other, and help each other a lot more.”

First-year funding of \$1,711,000 million was secured with \$500,000 philanthropic investment from JPMorgan Chase, a \$500,000 matching grant from the Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority, and \$711,000 investment of rental assistance funds from the Franklin County Board of Commissioners. Project partners are also providing in-kind services to support program participants. The Resiliency Bridge team is now seeking funds for the second and third years of the pilot program.



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Although NLIHC found that the local “housing wage” is \$19.83 per hour, the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) reports that only one of Ohio’s ten most common jobs pays that rate. A September 2021 [survey from the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio](#) found that 80 percent of employers and housing professionals faced reduced employee morale and lower productivity stemming from housing insecurity, 53 percent also reported higher turnover rates as a result of the local housing shortage.

The Resiliency Bridge project will be discussed on Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup> at “[Work & Home: How Affordable Housing Leads the Way for Economic Growth](#)” featuring business and housing experts. An impetus for this initiative is the Affordable Housing Alliance of Central Ohio’s plan to close the 54,000-household affordable housing gap in Franklin County. For more information on Resiliency Bridge, visit <https://www.ahaco.org/resiliency>.

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