

Ramsey County Legislative Priorities: 2025 Federal Legislative Platform (DRAFT)

LEGISLATIVE TOP PRIORITIES

Family and community stabilization:

- Investing in housing stability—affordability and transitions out of homelessness.
- Funding to implement the Minnesota African American Family Preservation Act.
- ~~Addressing racial disparities in out-of-home displacements.~~
- Preventing and responding to youth violence through innovative community programming and investments.

Systems transformation:

- Improving mental and behavioral health systems and support.
- Reforming criminal justice approaches, centering community.

Economic competitiveness and inclusion:

- Funding for Ramsey County capital improvement and infrastructure requests.
- ~~Funding transportation, including new revenues for transit, roads and bridges.~~
- Investing in workforce supports for all residents.
- Responding to climate change by prioritizing adaptation and resiliency.
- ~~Funding for Ramsey County capital improvement and infrastructure requests.~~
- Funding transportation, including new revenues for transit, roads and bridges.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS

RAMSEY COUNTY BONDING REQUESTS

Rice Creek Commons Infrastructure \$25M

The Park at RiversEdge \$20M

~~SUPPORT FOR OTHER BONDING REQUESTS~~

~~Gibbs Farm Pathways to Dakota & Pioneer Life, Ramsey County Historical Society \$9.9 million~~

Advancing Racial and Health Equity and Shared Community Power

PROTECT BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS

- Support immigrants and refugees in navigation and access to core programs and wrap around services such as public assistance, housing, medical assistance, basic cash support and safety and protection from domestic violence and with law enforcement.
- Support legislation that is welcoming and inclusive to immigrants/refugees and that invests in culturally specific services and community engagement, to build stable lives for themselves, their families and to contribute to the communities in which they live.

MISSCLASSIFICATION OF HMONG

- Support efforts to ensure the Hmong peoples are not misclassified as East Asian. The U.S. Census Bureau has historically misclassified them which has led to confusion in data, resources and perceptions of Hmong.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)

- Oppose legislation that would change or remove essential provisions of the ACA, including coverage for pre-existing conditions, dependent coverage until age 26, no limits on annual/lifetime coverage, no-cost coverage for preventative care and the mandate for individual coverage.
- Support the local-state-federal partnership structure for financing health care access and oppose measures that shift federal and state costs to counties.
- Support premium assistance to help keep the cost of insurance within reach.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

- Support efforts to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to provide equal protection under federal law to all people, regardless of gender.

MEDICAID SERVICES FINANCING

- Support legislation to enhance flexibility in the Medicaid program to support local care systems. Preserve the ability to match local funds and receive targeted supplemental payments and bolster the federal-state-local partnership structures for Medicaid services.

COMMITMENT TO VETERAN SUPPORT AND OUTREACH (CVSO) ACT

- Support legislation providing funding to states to carry out programs that improve outreach and assistance to veterans and the spouses, children and parents of veterans, to ensure that such individuals are fully informed about, and assisted in applying for, any veterans and veterans-related benefits and programs for which they may be eligible.

MENTAL HEALTH

- Support consistent funding for mental health services provided through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as well as legislation that will increase Ramsey County's ability to provide local systems of care. Funding for the Community Mental Health

Services (CMHS) block grant should be funded at current levels or increased to rise with demand for services.

- Support the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act which will reimburse federal student loans up to \$250,000 for those who pursue a career in the mental health field where there are shortages.
- Support legislation focused on helping schools to work with community groups to bring in more mental health professionals, as well as to train school staff to recognize the signs that a student may be struggling and connect them to help.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE FUNDING

- Support efforts to provide local and state governments flexible funding that can be used for public health response and community needs related to outbreaks of infectious diseases.

Putting Well-being and Community at the Center of Justice System Transformation

FIREARM REGULATION

- Support legislation to reinstate the Firearms Assault Weapons Ban to take a strong first step in addressing the epidemic number of mass shootings and other gun-related violence. When the 1994 ban sunset in 2004, a surge of automatic weapons shootings occurred, which has not subsided. The ban was effective and should be reinstated.

~~ICE DETENTION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC~~

- ~~• Support the release of immigrants in ICE detention who do not pose a threat to public safety during the length of their removal proceedings, starting with individuals in high-risk categories such as people 60 and over, women who are pregnant, and people with chronic illnesses, compromised immune systems or disabilities.~~
- ~~• Support efforts to ensure ICE detention facilities currently holding detainees are adhering to CDC COVID-19 safety guidelines, are proving effective and timely testing, and offering health supports including medical treatment.~~

BILLABLE MEDICAL SERVICES FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS

- Support legislation allowing Medicaid/Medicare funding to pay for all billable medical services for incarcerated individuals. Most of the patients who are incarcerated qualify for Medicaid and Medicare and many have it before incarceration. Keeping Medicare and Medicaid insurance current and active for individuals increases access to care and ability to receive timely care after release, improving healthcare outcomes and decreasing local and county government cost.

Responding to Climate Change and Increasing Community Resilience

EQUITABLE CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION

- Support legislation that mitigates contributions to climate change and promotes sustainability in county operations.
- Support legislation that resources the expansion of adaptation and mitigation efforts and responds to the impacts of increasingly extreme weather.
- Support legislation that focuses on increasing use of local clean energy to create jobs and diversify the local economy.
- Support legislation and funding that protects and enhances natural environments, including efforts that address reforestation needs for local governments impacted by the Emerald Ash Borer.
- Support legislation that resources initiatives focused on the mental and physical health impacts of climate change.

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND ACT (LAWCON)

- Support continued funding through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

CLEAN WATER

- Support investment and funding for infrastructure improvements relating to any contamination of water systems, as well as improved corrosion control, lead monitoring and public notification of contaminants in public drinking water. Support improvement of storm water, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.
- Support passage of the Mississippi River Restoration and Resilience Initiative (MRRRI).

RECYCLING AND ENERGY

- Support increased investments in sustainable and renewable energy.
- Support efforts to refine new Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations to clarify that certain receivers of waste material should not be liable for PFAS-related impacts resulting from the required processing of that waste, as these facilities are not generating or creating the waste being processed or causing PFAS to be present in that waste.

Advancing a Holistic Approach to Strengthen Families

SOCIAL SERVICES BLOCK GRANT FUNDING (SSBG)

- Support legislation to maintain or increase SSBG block grants at the current funding level. SSBG supports services such as adult protective services, special needs childcare, child welfare and child abuse prevention.

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP)

- Support efforts to preserve and expand the SNAP program to address hunger and food security issues for no and low-income residents, including efforts to raise the minimum benefit level and

to eliminate three-month time limits on SNAP eligibility for certain working-age adults and college students.

- Support legislation to allow persons to use SNAP benefits to purchase hot prepared meals.

TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE FOR NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF)

- Support efforts to increase investment in and expand eligibility for TANF.
- Pursue/Support additional funding and broader allowable uses of funding to provide workforce development supports for residents beyond what traditional program funds (WIOA/TANF) allow. Broader uses would include training stipends to enhance upward mobility, work tools and equipment, basic needs payments, and child enrichment activities.

FAMILIES FIRST (TITLE IV-E)

- Support efforts to implement full funding and rollout of the Families First promises to address long-standing issues with state and county child protection and foster care systems, including racial disparities of out-of-home displacements.

PARENTING TIME ORDERS

- Support legislation allowing the use of Title IV-D funds to get parenting time orders set for Recognition of Parentage (ROP) families like what is currently allowed for court-ordered paternity adjudication families.

HUNGER RELIEF

- Support additional funding and policy changes to address hunger and food insecurity relief needs in Ramsey County for children and adults.
- Support legislation to permanently provide no-cost school lunch to all children.
- ~~Support efforts to continue increased summer EBT for children and youth who wouldn't receive the School Lunch Program.~~
- Support policy change and funding to allow food growing spaces; increasing community resiliency, urban agriculture and local food economies.

ADDITIONAL CASH PAYMENTS OR ECONOMIC SUPPORTS TO FAMILIES

- Support legislation to provide cash payments or other economic supports to families in a way that will not make them ineligible for economic assistance programs, with the goal of removing barriers so families can self-stabilize.

Intergenerational Prosperity for Racial and Economic Inclusion

THE PARK AT RIVERSEDGE

- Pursue \$20 million in funding for the Park at RiversEdge. RiversEdge is an innovative public-private project revitalizing the historic riverfront and expanding public access to the Mississippi River. The Park at RiversEdge is a new nine-acre urban park that will provide a land bridge extension of the public realm space. The funds will be used for the design, engineering, and

construction of underlying infrastructure, parking to support the site, and the park itself. The Park at RiversEdge will include expanded public access to the river from the downtown bluff to the shoreline, community gathering space for public events, and trails that connect to the river and to other downtown destinations and park trail systems.

TRANSPORTATION

- Support federal and state funding for passenger rail planning, design, implementation, operation, as well as freight capacity improvements that would benefit passenger rail service.
- Pursue funding for critical Ramsey County projects, including, but not limited to:
 - ~~Riverview Corridor: Between Union Depot and the Mall of America.~~
 - ~~METRO Gold Line Corridor (Gateway): Between Union Depot and Woodbury.~~
 - METRO Purple Line (Rush Line Corridor) Bus Rapid Transit: Study underway 2023.
 - Bruce Vento Trail: From Buerkle Road to Highway 96.
 - Rice Street Revitalization: From Pennsylvania Avenue to Wheelock Parkway.
 - Rice Street Revitalization: From Wheelock Parkway to County Road B.

DIGITAL INCLUSION

- Pursue and support federal efforts and funding for digital inclusion and equity to ensure all residents have access to affordable broadband choices, computing devices and multilingual training and internet-safety skills. This includes, but is not limited to: increasing the federal standard for broadband speeds; increasing the availability of high-quality and competitive broadband choices for residents in single-family homes, public housing, and apartment buildings and condominiums, particularly in urban digital desert census tracts; and supporting renewed funding for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and other affordable, sustainable and subsidized device ownership programs and multilingual digital literacy navigation and skills training that ensure all residents can participate in the economy and digital life.

HEADING HOME RAMSEY CONTINUUM OF CARE

- Pursue funding and policy legislation in partnership with the Heading Home Ramsey Continuum of Care to fund emergency shelter, day shelter and winter warming spaces, and critical supportive services such as outreach, shelter entry, and diversion for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

AFFORDABLE AND STABLE HOUSING

- Support an increase in public funds for Housing Choice Vouchers, affordable homeownership and the production and preservation of affordable ownership housing.
- Support legislation to advance policy and practice reforms that reduce barriers to affordable homeownership, such as reducing the cost of production.
- Classify HUD-funded affordable housing projects owned by private and nonprofit developers as "Private Infrastructure" under the Build America Buy America Act, so that local governments are not required to track the origin of all construction materials. This requirement would make administration of HOME and CDBG programs burdensome for local governments.

- Oppose legislation to change or eliminate the HOME Program, which provides important funding for affordable housing units in market-rate multifamily new construction, ~~foreclosed/forfeit property acquisition, rehabilitation and resale, and down payment assistance to first-time homebuyers throughout suburban Ramsey County cities.~~ Ramsey County is part of a four-county consortium and currently receives approximately \$400,000 per year from HOME, a reduction of more than \$350,000 per year over the past 10 years.
- Support legislation to restore funding to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). CDBG supports community development programs for low- and moderate-income families in suburban Ramsey County. Ramsey County currently receives approximately \$1.2 million, down 50% from historic levels. The county supports the restoration of funding for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Development Block Grant.

~~TAX INCENTIVES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING~~

- ~~Support passage of the Affordable Housing Improvement Act to increase the development of affordable housing nationwide by approximately 450,000 housing units. The bill provides incentives to developers by increasing the housing credit allocation by 50%, phased in over five years. It would also lock in the 4% LIHTC credit rate for financing with housing bonds and tax credits.~~

RAMSEY COUNTY SUPPORT OF OTHER POSITIONS

In addition to the recommendations contained in this platform, the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners generally supports the legislative recommendations of the organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

The National Association of Counties (NACo) and its associated professional organizations, not including any recommendations that are inconsistent with Ramsey County's values and strategic goals.