

# Homelessness in Lexington grows, but shelter beds are full

BY KENDALL STATON  
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More people in Lexington are without homes, and there’s not enough resources to keep up. The city needs to build an emergency shelter to address the homelessness crisis in Fayette County, according to a new report by EHI Consultants, a local community development firm. There are 925 people in Lexington experiencing “literal homelessness,” according to Lexington’s annual point-in-time survey conducted in late January, which means they’re living in emergency shelters or on the streets. The survey does not include other facets of homelessness, like people couch hopping or living in hotels. Lexington has seen a 32% increase in homelessness since 2020, and an increase of 100 people since 2024. There are only 498 shel-

ter beds in the city for people coming directly off the street. Lexington needs to build more beds, the EHI report said. “The need is not hypothetical. It is real, it is immediate and it is growing,” said Joshua Mckinley, Executive Director of Arbor Youth Services, a shelter for unaccompanied youth. The report from EHI, commissioned by the city government for \$155,000, outlined the need to build a low-barrier emergency shelter, with services offered on site, like mental health treatment and transitional housing assistance. Low-barrier shelters are meant to be more accessible by limiting the number of requirements to be allowed in. Low-barrier shelters accept people regardless of gender, age, identity, disability or other limiting factors, like owning a pet. Professionals across the homelessness prevention and social work field urged

the city to create more capacity to serve the homeless population at a city council meeting on Tuesday. Ed Holmes, with EHI Consultants, said it would take years to see the shelter built, if the city decides to move forward. **WHAT BARRIERS DO HOMELESS PEOPLE IN LEXINGTON FACE?** Sherri Baptiste, a supervisor at the Salvation Army, said Lexington’s homeless shelters have been stretched thin, and opening a new emergency shelter and service hub would help meet a ferocious need. “Our shelter was not built to meet the growing demands we now face,” she said. “We are consistently operating at or near full capacity. Despite our best efforts, we simply cannot accommodate every individual in need. “This gap between what we can offer and what is needed is one of the most urgent challenges we face ... we risk turning people away

not because they don’t need help, but because we physically cannot provide it.” Arbor Youth Services houses individuals based on age. Families cannot stay at their shelter together, which has led many to deny service, Mckinley said. “This is not a choice any parent should have to make, and yet it is a daily reality in our city,” he said. “A city-funded family shelter would fill a glaring gap in our homelessness response system. It would ensure family unity, a critical component for the emotional and psychological well being of both parents and children. It would provide a safer, more stable environment for families facing housing insecurity. It would reduce barriers to accessing services, education and long term housing solutions.” Low-barrier shelters are often aimed at underserved populations, like the elderly and people who otherwise can’t find safety in existing shelters. The aging homeless

population in Lexington faces barriers, like mobility issues and needing access to medication, that make current homeless shelters inaccessible to them, said Abigail Latimer, an assistant professor at the University of Kentucky’s College of Social Work with over 15 years of experience as a social worker. She said 27% of Lexington’s homeless population is over the age of 50. “That’s hundreds of our neighbors in desperate need of age-appropriate support and housing,” Latimer said. A centralized service hub would not only better serve the people experiencing homelessness, she said, but also improve public health and safety by reducing the number of people living on the streets. “As homelessness continues to grow, both nationally and here in Lexington, our communities need to be prepared to step in and support our neighbors,” said Lynden Bond, another assistant professor at UK’s

College of Social Work. “One of the best ways we can do this is by ensuring that they have a safe place to access resources and shelter as they work to locate permanent housing.” Another group that would benefit from a low-barrier shelter is the LGBTQ+ community, said David Shadd, director of programs at The Hope Center, Lexington’s largest homeless shelter. He said there are a lot of people who need help in a way the community is not currently providing. “A lot of trans individuals are really struggling with our current shelter system. It doesn’t meet their needs,” Shadd said. “They’re forced to make a choice that doesn’t really fit with their personal feelings or fit with who they think they are.” Building more beds in an accessible shelter, he said, is the first step to filling the gaps in service across Lexington. Mayor Linda Gorton created a homelessness task force at Tuesday’s meeting to discuss the best way to implement the EHI study’s recommendations. The task force will meet in the fall.

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# Fayette school board will hold second vote on tax increase

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The Fayette school board will hold a second vote and a public hearing on a controversial resolution to increase the occupational license tax for schools, after the Kentucky Attorney General ruled this week that the board’s first vote was unlawful. “The OLT resolution will be included on the June 23 board agenda. Additionally, there will be a public hearing to provide the community an additional opportunity to share feedback directly with the board,” Fayette Superintendent Demetrus Liggins said. School district spokesperson Dia Davidson Smith said Friday the date of the public hearing will be publicly announced and advertised in accordance with Kentucky law. Kentucky Attorney General Russell Coleman ruled Wednesday that the school board failed to provide the legally required notice to the public before its May 27 meeting and vote to raise the tax. Parents and other people in the community have expressed concerns about a lack of transparency in how the school board handled the vote. The backlash has been intense, with Kentucky Auditor Allison Ball saying Thursday she is considering a financial examination or audit of the school district. According to the attorney general’s opinion, the school board’s 3-2 vote to ask the Fayette Fiscal Court to increase school tax rates on residents and businesses’ net income from 0.5% to 0.75% was improper because, under state law, school boards must notify the public and hold a formal hearing before voting on new or increased taxes. “Tax and spend government is a danger to Kentucky’s future, especially when officials who should be accountable to Fayette County voters try to ignore the rules to raise taxes,” Coleman

said. “If the Fayette County School Board members believe they need more of Kentuckians’ hard-earned dollars, they should clearly and publicly make their case before their own constituents.” Fayette school district officials have argued the vote was legal and the tax increase was needed to cover a \$16 million budget shortfall. Given Coleman’s opinion, Fayette County Attorney Angela Evans advised the fiscal court not to vote on the increase Thursday, as the school board had asked, and the fiscal court followed her direction. Before that, fiscal court member Brian Miller, the District 1 County Commissioner, confirmed that he was a school district employee and would refuse himself from the vote if it occurred. Davidson Smith said Friday the fiscal court’s decision not to vote was “per our request after the opinion of the AG was released.” But Fayette County Clerk Susan Lamb told the Herald-Leader, “While the (Fayette County) Board of Education did withdraw their resolution following the release of the AG’s opinion, the fiscal court acted upon the AG’s opinion because it was received first.” The Clerk of Fiscal Court was notified about the AG’s opinion at 10:21 am, Wednesday, June 4. The Board of Education notified the Clerk of Fiscal Court about withdrawing their resolution following the release of the AG’s opinion at 11:02 am, Wednesday, June 4, Lamb said. The current occupational license tax is expected to bring in \$57 million to the district for the next fiscal year. Initially, the proposed increase in January 2026 would be \$13 million to \$16 million, with an estimated \$27 million to \$32 million annually when fully implemented, Fayette Deputy Superintendent Houston Barber has said. The average Fayette County worker is paying

\$26 per month under the current Occupational License Tax Rate for schools. Under the increase, the average worker would be paying \$39 per month, or \$13 more. Annually, the average Fayette County worker pays \$312. Under the increase, they would pay \$468 per year. At the May 27 meeting, board member Tyler Murphy, vice chair Amy Green and board member Penny Christian voted in favor of the tax increase. Board members Amanda Ferguson and Monica Mundy voted against it. Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe, R-Lexington, first asked for an Attorney General’s opinion after hearing from her constituents. “The FCPS board voted to increase the occupational tax without proper notification or advertisement that the school board was entertaining a discussion of a new levy, not to mention the time/date when it was going to be voted on by the board,” Bledsoe wrote in her request to the AG. There was no time for the public to properly engage the topic, nor plan to attend the meeting, she said. “The School Board’s failure to provide the statutorily-required notice makes the vote unlawful and void,” the opinion said. “This validates what so many in our community, including myself, felt: Taxpayers were shut out of a huge decision about their own tax dollars,” Bledsoe said after Coleman’s announcement. Bledsoe also asked Ball to conduct an audit. On Thursday, Ball said her office is considering an audit of the Fayette school district after hearing from parents and other constituents concerned about “the state of FCPS.” Liggins has not yet commented on the possible state audit. Parent Matthew Vied has said he would lead an effort to recall the tax increase if it were approved. Valarie Honeycutt Spears: (859) 379-4967, @vhspears



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Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-S.D.), holding printed graphs, runs to a bus headed to the White House for a meeting with President Donald Trump on Capitol Hill in Washington, on Wednesday, June 4, 2025.

# Millions would lose Obamacare coverage under Trump’s bill

BY SARAH KLIFF AND MARGOT SANGER-KATZ  
NYT News Service/Syndicate Stories

Millions of Affordable Care Act enrollees would lose health coverage under the Republicans’ major policy bill, which would make coverage more expensive and harder to obtain. Most of the proposals in the bill, which passed the House last month, are technical changes -- reductions to enrollment periods, adjustments to formulas, and additional paperwork requirements. But together, they would leave about 4 million people uninsured in the next 10 years, the Congressional Budget Office reported Wednesday. “In many ways, it’s sort of repeal by paper cut,” said Audrey Morse Gasteier, the director of the state marketplace in Massachusetts. Alongside these proposals is another challenge to the program: Additional “Obamacare” funding is set to expire at the end of the year, and Republicans do not plan to extend it. If they don’t, the CBO estimates an additional 4.2 million Americans would lose coverage. Taken together, proposed changes and the expiration of the subsidies could threaten the viability of the “Obamacare” markets themselves, which have more than tripled in size since 2014, and currently cover 24 million people. “This bill poses a seriously existential threat to the future of the Affordable Care Act marketplaces in a way that we haven’t seen since 2017,” said Sabrina Corlette, co-director of the Center on Health Insurance Reforms at Georgetown University. These losses would be in addition to those from

the bill’s many changes to Medicaid, the health insurance program for the poor and disabled. Cuts to Medicaid are expected to cause 7.8 million more people to be uninsured by the end of a decade. The White House is broadly supportive of the changes, said Kush Desai, a spokesperson, who contended the bill would lower premiums for certain enrollees and reduce fraud in the “Obamacare” marketplaces. It is unclear whether the Senate, which returned from recess this week, will make any major changes to the “Obamacare” provisions of the policy bill or extend the extra tax credit funding. **MORE PAPERWORK, LESS GENEROUS BENEFITS** The bill’s changes to the marketplaces can be thought of in three large categories. **By imposing additional paperwork requirements, the bill would make it harder to sign up for insurance and qualify for tax credits.** The Republican bill would unwind much of the automation built into “Obamacare” by design. The current system allows most people to sign up for coverage and financial assistance in one online session by allowing systems to automatically ping electronic databases to confirm key details, like income and citizenship. Instead, the bill would require more people to present original documents at the time they enroll for coverage, and require marketplace workers to manually check them. People who can’t easily prove their income is correct would not receive subsidies, with no grace period. Critics of the changes say the new paperwork

requirements and the tight time frame for completing them -- the bill would also halve the annual enrollment window, from 90 days to 45 -- mean many people would lose coverage simply because they didn’t gather and verify documents in time. **Second, the bill would make “Obamacare” more expensive for many patients.** A proposed tweak to a federal formula would allow insurers to cover a smaller share of medical costs. Another proposal would slightly increase the share of people’s incomes they could be asked to pay for health insurance. A third would require enrollees to pay the government back any extra tax credits they received because they incorrectly estimated their income (under current law, these so-called “reconciliation” payments are capped for low-income enrollees). **Third, the bill would block many legal immigrants, including refugees and those on student visas, from using government subsidies.** The “Obamacare” marketplaces have always prohibited immigrants in the country illegally from accessing tax credits, but this additional exception will cause around 1 million immigrants to become uninsured. Gasteier estimates that this group makes up about 55,000 of Massachusetts’ 400,000 enrollees. “We expect they would not be able to afford the coverage that they’re in today and would drop coverage and become uninsured,” she said. House Republicans and conservative health policy experts who have advised them on the legislation say the changes in the bill are meant to ensure only eligible people get federal help. They have made similar arguments about new reporting requirements the bill establishes for the Medicaid program. Brian Blase, the president of the Paragon Institute, a conservative health research group, has published papers arguing fraud is widespread in the marketplaces. He said the new checks would ensure that people who receive federal tax credits actually qualify for the help. “Should people have to do something when the taxpayer is bearing most of the cost? Yes, that’s a no-brainer,” he said. “They are making a claim of government benefits. It’s not too much to ask that they spend 15 to 30 minutes updating their information.”