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## Letter: Build Back Better can boost city's weatherization program

Feb 17, 2022

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**R**ight after the recent elections, Mayor Byron Brown found the City of Buffalo at number seven on a national ranking from **Forbes magazine**. It's probably not the list he wanted to be on as it was the list of U.S. cities with the highest poverty rates. Comparing the 2014 and 2019 rates and Buffalo showed almost no change compared to sizeable decreased rates for 18 of the top 20 cities.

Buffalo also tops the rankings as the city with the oldest housing stock in the nation with 85% of housing units built before 1960. Many of these houses are have high ceilings, inefficient heating systems and are drafty and poorly insulated. Put these two rankings together, winters in Buffalo are financially stressful for more than 30% of the population.

Today's solution, the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), pays out a lot of money for wasted energy. That's why I am excited for the Build Back Better bill being considered in the U.S. Senate. One of the provisions is funding for energy efficiency and weatherization projects. Buffalo currently has a Weatherization Program which will assist homeowners with expenses in upgrading furnaces/boilers, hot water heaters, as well as insulation and the sealing of air gaps. This underpublicized program can do a lot more if the Build Back Better funds become available. For home owners, the improvements pay for themselves within 10 years. For renters, the decrease in the cost of their utilities is immediate.

There may be long term assistance in Gov. Kathy Hochul's budget, which proposes a comprehensive housing plan to create and preserve 100,000 affordable homes across the state and electrify an additional 50,000 homes. City planners need to be at the front of the line with their plans that identify where the money will have the greatest impact for the city.

John Szalasny

Williamsville

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