

# NEWS RELEASE

**Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive**  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Date: September 2, 2022**

**Contact:** Greta Johnson  
Director of Communications & Assistant Chief of Staff  
Office of Executive Shapiro  
[executivepress@summitoh.net](mailto:executivepress@summitoh.net)  
330-643-2656

## **Summit County Cares set to receive national recognition**

Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council are thrilled to see the housing and utility assistance program created at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic receive national recognition from President Joe Biden and his administration. At the recently announced “Communities in Action: Building a Better America” event to be held at the White House on September 7, Mayor Dan Horrigan of Akron and Executive Director Jim Mullen of United Way of Summit County will have an opportunity to tout the tremendous success of the Summit County Cares program. Through a total of \$56 million in funding, largely from the Office of County Executive Shapiro, Summit County Cares has been acknowledged across the state and country for its effective support of over 16,000 people and counting.

After receiving over \$90 million in federal funding from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in 2020, County Executive Shapiro and her team recognized the sudden financial stress facing thousands of families in our community and mobilized to create the Summit County Cares program to provide rent, mortgage, and utility assistance to people in need. With the support of County Council, County Executive Shapiro partnered several local organizations, including United Way, Community Action, Mustard Seed, Battered Women’s Shelter, Fair Housing, Community Legal Aid and others to administer the program using discretionary CARES Act funds.

By the end of 2020, Summit County Cares had paid \$15 million in direct rent, mortgage, and utility assistance to more than 3,700 people. Residents in 25 Summit County communities received assistance, with the City of Akron alone making up 81% of applications and receiving over \$700,000 in water and sewer assistance.

“In March of 2020, we all felt fear and uncertainty like we had never experienced before,” said County Executive Shapiro. “We acted quickly and decisively to launch Summit County Cares to ease the financial burden on our most vulnerable residents. By paying housing and utility bills, we were able to offer much needed stability. I am beyond proud of my team’s hard work and dedication, grateful for the support of County Council, and appreciative of the partnership we led with United Way and others.”

In 2021, County Executive Shapiro and Council were provided with additional federal funding, this time explicitly for rental assistance, and continued to build on the successes of Summit County Cares in 2020. As part of President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), Summit County received \$28 million in

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) funds. Within months, Summit County led the entire state in the percent of aid distributed. In fact, the Summit County Cares program was so effective that when Community Action Akron Summit received an allocation of ERA funds from the State of Ohio, the agency opted to partner with County Executive Shapiro's Office to allow for ease of application for residents. Together, Summit County Executive Shapiro and her team, Community Action Akron Summit, and United Way provided over \$24 million in rent and nearly \$2 million in utility payments on behalf of 13,225 people in every Summit County community in 2021.

"At a time when some state and local governments are returning money back to the federal government, Summit County's leaders are consciously investing these dollars into the individuals and families that need them most to stabilize our communities and put us on a path toward a brighter future. I am proud of my role and the role my colleagues on County Council have played in Summit County Cares and commend County Executive Shapiro and her team for always putting people first," said Council President Elizabeth Walters.

While other states, counties, and cities were forced to return unutilized funds to the federal government, County Executive Shapiro, her team, and her partners have distributed every dollar of allocated federal funding on time. In fact, Summit County Cares' efficiency and support for residents earned the attention from the State of Ohio, which delivered an additional \$17 million in unused federal funds to extend the life of the program and continue helping families in need. Few local governments in the entire country that can claim such success.

Today, the Summit County Cares program continues to provide essential aid to people across our county. As pocketbooks are hit hard by inflation, County Executive Shapiro and her partners are keeping people and their families in their homes, providing them the opportunity to continue working, continue their education, continue raising their kids, with the comfort of mind that if they are behind on a utility bill, there is a program here to help.

County Executive Shapiro looks forward to seeing the \$17 million covering rent and utility costs for thousands of residents as well as covering administrative and staff costs at United Way. Residents in need of assistance from Summit County Cares with rent or utilities can apply for aid at [summitcountycares.org](https://summitcountycares.org) or by calling 2-1-1.

###