



Update the Missouri property tax credit to preserve their independence and dignity.

Older Missourians need property tax relief from Jeff City

BY JANET BAKER
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As the executive director of the Kansas City Shepherd's Center, I witness firsthand the challenges facing older Missourians who are struggling to maintain their independence amid rising property taxes and housing costs. For many, these increases jeopardize their ability to re-

main in their communities, threatening their cherished independence.

Across the state, policymakers have acknowledged this pressing issue, with bipartisan efforts to update the Missouri property tax credit, commonly known as the "circuit breaker." This credit, established in 1973 to

provide relief to older adults and individuals with disabilities on fixed incomes, has unfortunately not been updated since 2008, leaving many in our community without the assistance they desperately need as inflation continues to make them economically vulnerable.

The consequences of this stagnation are dire. Seniors and individuals with disabilities who once qualified for this critical support now find themselves excluded, facing financial strain that jeopardizes their ability to stay in their homes. The circuit breaker isn't merely about financial relief. It's about preserving dignity and independence for those who have contributed so much to our communities.

Despite bipartisan support and legislative efforts, the passage of updated legislation has been stymied by divisive election year politics, particularly in the Missouri Senate.

While a measure to freeze property taxes has been passed by the state and county levels, its impact won't be felt immediately, leaving many of our clients in distress about their current financial stability and housing security.

At KC Shepherd's Center, we receive calls weekly from older adults being threatened with eviction and utility shut-off notices. Even the small Social Security increase in 2024 excludes some older adults from eligibility for the tax credit as currently structured and puts them at risk of losing their home and stability because of factors beyond their con-

trol.

These are the real-life consequences of inaction on updating the Missouri property tax credit income eligibility and credit amount available to older Missourians.

It's time for our legislators to act decisively. By increasing both income eligibility and the credit amount to reflect today's economic realities, we can provide immediate relief to those older adults 65 and older who are most vulnerable in our communities. Additionally, ensuring the credit is adjusted regularly would prevent it from becoming outdated in the future, ensuring that low-income older adults across Missouri who need it most remain eligible.

I urge our lawmakers to prioritize the expansion of the Missouri property tax credit. By doing so, they can provide meaningful assistance to countless older Missourians and individuals with disabilities, enabling them to age with dignity in the communities they call home.

Janet Baker is executive director of Kansas City Shepherd's Center, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to serving older adults across the greater Kansas City area.