Study: Hundreds of thousands of Ohioans cannot find affordable housing

A new report provides more evidence that thousands of Ohioans cannot find an affordable place to live.

The study by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, an advocacy group, estimated that 227,304 extremely low-income Ohio households cannot find housing they can comfortably afford.

"People need a safe, decent, affordable place to live in order to recover from addiction, raise a healthy baby, hold down a job, and do well in school," said Bill Faith, executive director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio.

"We'll never build a healthier, wealthier, better-educated Ohio unless we first stabilize our foundation: housing."

The study concluded that America needs 7.4 million new affordable homes to meet the demand among those who are extremely poor (defined as either at or below the poverty level or earning no more than 30 percent of the area's median income). Most of those households spend more than half their income on housing, according to the report.

"They are one illness, one divorce, one paycheck away from not being able to pay the rent, facing the possibility of homelessness," said Diane Yentel, president of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

The report is based on 2015 Census Bureau data, but Faith believes the situation has only worsened since then.

"I think in most parts of the state, the rental market has even tightened up more," he said. "That's certainly true in Columbus."

According to the report, central Ohio needs an additional 42,860 affordable homes to meet demand.

Another way of viewing the shortage: For every 100 extremely low-income households that need housing, 31 affordable homes exist in central Ohio. Statewide, 42 affordable homes exist for every 100 families in need.

The most severe affordable-housing shortage in the nation can be found in Las Vegas, where 12 homes exist for every 100 extremely low-income families.