

The first round of federal aid dollars from the latest federal relief bill to pass through the Controlling Board will go toward rent and utility assistance.

The board gave its OK to the use of \$100 million in funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 for the aid programs, which will be administered by community action agencies through the Development Services Agency.

Mike Fraizer with DSA's community services division said the legislation passed by Congress included a total of \$25 billion nationwide for rental assistance, with a formula for its distribution to states. Some of that money could be used for utility assistance, including home energy bills.

The distribution model is similar to that used for \$50 million in rental assistance distributed at the end of 2020 using CARES Act money. Of that, more than \$40 million has already been distributed, he said.

Some changes in the federal law, such as the use of area median income to determine eligibility and the inclusion of home energy, led to some differences, Mr. Fraizer told [Sen. Matt Dolan](#) (R-Chagrin Falls).

"While it's not identical, it's a very similar structure in how it's going to operate," he said.

Of the \$100 million, up to \$10 million can be used for administrative costs at community action agencies, he said.

Controlling Board members touted the support in statements.

"Individuals and families are continuing to face financial burdens due to this pandemic," said [Rep. Scott Oelslager](#) (R-Canton). "I'm pleased to be a part of the approval process of this critical measure in order to assist Ohioans in making ends meet when it comes to rent and utility payments."

Added [Sen. Vernon Sykes](#) (D-Akron): "Ohioans have resiliently battled the Covid-19 pandemic, but those who have been financially impacted will have a more difficult time recovering without additional support. Nobody should have to live without basic utilities, and these funds will create tangible solutions that help meet Ohioans' needs."