

Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | February 2021

Join LMM in Advancing Racial Equity



Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's history and mission is rooted in the need to advance racial equity and social justice. LMM recently re-affirmed its commitment to racial justice through the creation of our [vision statement for racial justice](#).

As LMM's programming often treats the effects of racism and discrimination on our community, it is critical that we look closely at the systems that create policies that contribute to these unequal outcomes. Below are examples of our ongoing efforts within the advocacy department to advance racial justice, and ways that you, the LMM community, can get involved.

1. **Review LMM's 2021 Advocacy Priorities:** LMM has updated its 2021 Advocacy Mission & Vision statement to explicitly state advancing racial equity as an advocacy priority. This will help to keep issues of racial justice central to all advocacy efforts.
2. **End Source of Income Discrimination:** LMM continues to advance efforts to end Source of Income discrimination in Cleveland. Currently, it is legal to refuse to rent to someone who plans to pay rent with a non-cash source of income like a voucher or other government benefit (i.e. VA, SSI). As Source of Income discrimination often serves as a proxy for racial discrimination, outlawing such discrimination would expand housing options for black residents and also contribute to more diverse communities. [Sign on to support local efforts!](#)
3. **Apply to work at LMM:** LMM is hiring a full-time staff member to serve as a [Racial Equity and Social Justice Fellow](#). This employee will be tasked with creating an advocacy training program that provides LMM program participants with the skills necessary to advocate for themselves, and over-time, policy change. This position will also look for additional areas of policy and advocacy change that are needed to create a more equitable community. Deadline to apply, March 1, 2021.
4. **Contribute to LMM's Blog Series:** LMM continues to accept submission for the A Push Towards Justice blog series. This blog series allows individuals to share why racial justice matters to them. The blogs can be written or submitted via video, and submitters may share personal experiences, opinions on relevant policy topics, or a connection to LMM's work. Email Margie Glick (mglick@lutheranmetro.org) with questions or to submit content.
5. **Join an Advocacy Committees:** LMM's Advocacy Department coordinates a Staff Advocacy Committee and a Board-level Advocacy Committee. These committees provide insight into the policy change and social change needed to advance racial equity. Email Margie Glick (mglick@lutheranmetro.org) to learn more about these opportunities.

Though these efforts, and your support, LMM will continue to address the root causes and symptoms of racism and discrimination in our community with the goal of increased opportunity and better outcomes for our program participants.

From the Desk of the Advocacy Director



Dear LMM Community,

It is difficult to believe that it has been nearly 12 months since the pandemic began to affect each of our lives. I still remember the fear that I felt in the days leading up to the state-wide shutdown, as I am sure you do too. While it has been a difficult year, and a cold winter, there is some hope on the horizon. This hope is reflected in senior's ability to access the vaccine, seeing schools start to re-open, in person, and the increased rates of vaccinations across the country.

There is also hope in the leadership we are seeing in Washington D.C. President Joe Biden, in his short term in office, has taken numerous steps to roll-back some of the more harmful policy changes made by the Trump administration. This includes extending the eviction moratorium through March, overturning a HUD rule that would make it more difficult to challenge discrimination in the housing industry and repealing a law that would prevent government contractors and federal grant recipients from providing diversity training. Further, President Biden's budget proposal would also increase the availability of rental assistance, homeless services funding, SNAP benefits and would extend the Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage – all changes that would help keep the people LMM serves healthy and safe during the remainder of the pandemic.

Moving forward, LMM will continue to advocate for policy changes at the federal level that would contribute to better outcomes for LMM's program participants especially those related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but will also begin to shift efforts to focus to state and local advocacy needs. While policy at all levels is inextricably linked, we believe that by focusing on Ohio, and Cleveland, we can have the greatest possible impact. We hope you continue to join us in these efforts!

Best,

Margie Glick

Director of Advocacy



COVID-19 Vaccine Access



LMM is grateful to see COVID-19 vaccine access and distribution efforts continue to expand across Ohio. Vaccine access is especially important to LMM's older program participants who live in congregate living arrangements like those who in LMM's Guardianship Services program. Fortunately, many of these nursing home facilities have been proactive in early January with distributing the vaccine to older adults who have agreed to receive the vaccine. For the older adults we work with living in the community, local departments of aging, APS, and our local mental health boards have been instrumental with getting the word out on where and how to receive the vaccine. These local coordination efforts are encouraging to ensure all vulnerable older adults can receive the vaccine in a timely manner.

POLICY CORNER

Pell Ban Overturned



Postsecondary education can be life changing for individuals who are currently or recently incarcerated. This is because such opportunities create hope, where there may be little, and by providing an individual with skills and knowledge, can help break the cycle of recidivism and poverty post-incarceration. Unfortunately, for the past 26 years, prison education programs have been highly limited because of a ban on incarcerated individuals accessing the Pell Grant. This ban was originally included in the *Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994*, which when signed by President Clinton, was the largest crime bill in history.

The ban on Pell, had a clear and decisive impact on incarcerated individuals' ability to access education. Prior to the ban there were 350 postsecondary prison education programs; within 10 years of the legislation passing, there were 12. This punitive policy change was short sided. It is little coincidence that it is twice as common for inmates to have an eighth-grade education or less than the general public. This is partially because the school to prison pipeline puts youths (predominantly black youths) on a path to the criminal justice system at a very early age. Further, many crimes that lead people to prison are crimes of poverty that may have not occurred if an individual had access to steady employment and financial resources.

We are pleased to share that after years of bipartisan advocacy, including some by LMM's Program Director of Workforce Development Malika Kidd, the Pell ban was overturned in an end-of-year spending bill passed in December 2020. Reinstating Pell for those incarcerated will have clear individual and societal benefits. Research proves that prison education programs result in net savings to taxpayers, lower rates of recidivism and that prison education programs creates and a safer environment for prison employees. LMM is hopeful that the reversal of this ban will lead to the development of more programs like Chopping for Change. In doing so, our country can continue to take strides away from mass incarceration and towards improved long-term outcomes of individuals post-incarceration.

Featured Advocacy Partner:



Lutheran Services in America leads one of the largest health and human services networks in the U.S. with over \$22 billion in annual revenue, made up of over 300 Lutheran social ministry organizations that touch the lives of 1 in 50 Americans each year. As a network of Lutheran social ministry organizations, we are compelled to speak out against systemic racism and inequities that plague the country and use our voice and resources to work collaboratively for a more just society.

In the wake of George Floyd's murder, President and CEO Charlotte Haberaecker released a statement saying, "Our conviction that diversity is our strength, unity our biggest hope, and equity for all people throughout America must be demanded and achieved has never been truer — nor more deeply felt — than over this past week. George Floyd's senseless death, like the countless people before him struck down by systemic racism, must be more than yet another wake-up call."

In response, Lutheran Services in America has focused on programming that strengthens the network in efforts to seek racial justice and equity, including opportunities for Lutheran social ministries to examine their organizational data to determine where inequities lie, the ongoing Results Innovation Lab that disaggregates program data by race to identify how members can improve outcomes for youth of color, webinars that aim to help participants understand concrete steps needed to address systemic racism, an online resource hub, and a national advocacy platform that is rooted in the network's commitment to strive for racial equity and diversity.

We invite you to subscribe to our new quarterly Racial Equity and Justice Newsletter to learn about the many ways you can join the conversation as we work together to address the wrongdoings of our nation's past, dismantle systemic racism, and seek a more just and equitable society.



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Our Mission:

To promote shalom (peace, well-being) and justice (right relationships) through a Christian ministry of service and advocacy with those who are oppressed, forgotten and hurting.

Link with LMM



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E-newsletter sign-up at
www.lutheranmetro.org



Latest news at
www.lutheranmetro.org

5 Numbers to Know: LMM's COVID-19 Response

It has been nearly one year since the COVID-19 Pandemic began. LMM has worked hard over the past 12 months to keep people safe and healthy during these challenging times.

460,230

meals served to hotel hubs and shelters by LMM's Central Kitchen from March 2020 through January 2021

7

new meal sites serving individuals experiencing homelessness

700

individuals served through hotel hubs since the program launched in March 2020

43

COVID-19 advocacy actions taken by LMM

550,000

masks purchased for or donated to LMM since March of 2020

In The News: Senate Bill 17



Ohio Senator Tim Schaffer (R-Lancaster) has introduced Senate Bill 17 which would hurt many of the individuals LMM serves by adding unnecessary restrictions to individuals who utilize SNAP benefits and Medicaid benefits. The legislation, if passed, would prevent individuals with more than \$2,250 (in cash or bank accounts) from accessing SNAP; would impose a work or education requirement to receive Medicaid benefits; would restrict exemptions to the work requirement including raising the minimum age to

opt-out to 65 from 55; and would add additional reporting requirements for SNAP recipients. LMM **strongly opposes** this legislation, as creating additional barriers to safety net services during a pandemic will lead to harmful consequences. LMM is working with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank to advocate against the advancement of this legislation.

What We're Reading

[Slavic Village Residents Facing Eviction Struggle to Find Help](#)

[How giving a damn about eviction could help candidates win elections](#)

[Cleveland Right to Counsel Program Helping Halt Evictions, Provide Aid](#)

[Ohio prisons director: inmate population still too high](#)

[A historic housing crisis has America in its grip. Can Marcia Fudge save the day?](#)