

# Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | February 2022

## Advocating for a More Just Criminal Justice System



On Monday, *Apart*, a documentary that follows three women on their path from incarceration at the Northeast Reintegration Center (NERC) through their release back into community, aired on PBS's Independent Lens. Each of the three women profiled participated in Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's Chopping for Change (C4C) Program.

We hope you have had a chance to watch *Apart* either on PBS or at the 2021 Cleveland International Film Festival. If you have, you may feel inclined to *Take Action* to better support women prior to incarceration or after they are released from prison. The female prison population is fast-growing. From 1980 to 2019, the number of women incarcerated increased by 700%. According to [The Sentencing Project](#), the increase is due to "more expansive law enforcement efforts, stiffer drug sentencing laws, and post-conviction barriers to reentry that uniquely affect women."

In 2016, 3,521 women were released from Ohio state prisons. As the film portrayed, women post-release, must navigate collateral sanctions that can hamper their ability to reacclimate to community. There are more than 1,100 collateral sanctions in Ohio that can limit access to employment, housing, and transportation, factors which are also key to keeping someone from returning to prison post release. It should be little surprise that nearly one in five women (18%) released recidivate within three years.

The good news is that there are clear steps to break the cycle of incarceration. This includes expanding programs like LMM's C4C. Graduates of the C4C program recidivate at rates less than 3%. This is because the program provides trauma informed therapy, employable skills, and support to help participants regain confidence in themselves and their abilities. To make programs like C4C more easily available, LMM advocated for the REAL Act, which passed in 2020 and made Pell Grants available to individuals currently incarcerated. The legislation is in the process of being implemented. Learn more about the Real Act in this blog post, [Second Chances are Real — Let's Make Sure More Students Get Them](#), authored by Malika Kidd for *The Education Trust*. LMM has also advocated at the state level for legislation that would prioritize treatment in lieu of conviction. This helps address the underlying factors that can lead to incarceration which includes trauma, addiction, and domestic violence. It also importantly, keeps women out of the criminal justice system and the collateral sanctions that follow. This 2019 Policy Matters Ohio article, ["Chopping for Change" shows the power of addiction treatment](#), features women in C4C.

LMM continues to raise awareness to the need for more fair hiring practices. Criminal background can make finding employment challenging. The culinary industry is one of a few industries that look past prior justice involvement, which is helpful for many C4C participants. However, for those who want to pursue other work, employment prospects can be limited. At LMM we have "Banned the Box" and only conduct checks when there is a job offer. We then look at each candidate on an individual basis, and make a hiring decision based on a variety of individual factors. We urge places of employment to consider taking these actions, or even considering the progressive [Open Hiring](#) models.

Finally, LMM continues to advocate for fair chance housing practices. Too many of the individuals we serve at LMM face barriers to finding and keeping housing because of past justice involvement. This affects all of LMM's direct service areas. LMM will continue to advance efforts to limit how and when background checks can be used in the housing process. Learn more about Fair Chance Housing [here](#)!

## From the Desk of the Advocacy Director



**Dear LMM Community,**

Acknowledging a past mistake, and apologizing for it, is difficult. It requires us to admit our own failings and often swallow our own pride. Acknowledging a past mistake, and owning up to your worst moments in a documentary that airs nationally, is simply remarkable. I am truly in awe of the courage demonstrated by Amanda, Lydia and Tomika, who are featured in the documentary *Apart* which aired on PBS's Independent Lens.

Watching *Apart* for the second time, led me to think even more deeply about what it means to be given a second chance. All of us at some point will need a second, or a third, or a fourth, opportunity to right a wrong. This may be with a family member, a friend, or an employer. Generally, repaying our debt may require apologizing, accepting a verbal lecture, or maybe paying a fine. We take the necessary action, and with time, move on with our lives.

This is not the case for those who have been incarcerated. These men and women must carry their mistake with them to every job interview and housing application. They must explain their worst days of their lives, and worst decisions, repeatedly, with the hope that the person in power is capable of forgiveness. This creates uncertainty, stress, and vulnerability to individuals who desperately need stability, a clear mind, and the ability to move forward. We must move past this dynamic; there are too many of our neighbors who are impacted by the justice system and need to be given a fair chance to move forward.

This is not to say that harmful actions do not deserve consequences, and that victims do not deserve justice. It's more a matter of asking, at what point, should someone who has paid their debt to society, be allowed to return to normalcy? This is a question that drives LMM's advocacy related to both fair chance housing and fair chance hiring. We believe that everyone deserves second, third, and fourth chances, and that housing and employment should not be decided solely on the merit of a bad past decisions. People learn, and they evolve, and as shown by Amanda, Lydia and Tomika, they try to do better.

Best,  
Margie Glick

## LMM Recieves \$900k Department of Justice Grant



In December, LMM was thrilled be awarded \$900k from the United States Department of Justice to expand the Chopping for Change (C4C) Program into the Grafton Correctional Institute in Lorain County. This is the first major expansion of C4C, and will allow an entirely new population of incarcerated individuals to benefit from life-changing education and training. The grant is part of the Second Chance Act's Adult Reentry Education, Employment, Treatment and Recovery Program which aims to "develop a strategic plan for integrating correctional and employment programming and/or establishing, expanding, and improving treatment for people with substance use disorders during incarceration and in

order to help facilitate the successful reintegration of offenders returning to communities." This grant program was initially established in the Second Chance Act authored by U.S. Senator Rob Portman and the late Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones in 2005, and signed into law in 2008. Since this announcement in late 2021, LMM has met with Congressional staff from Senator Portman and Brown's offices, and staff from Representatives Shontel Brown, Bob Gibbs, and Marcy Kaptur's offices to express our thanks for this funding, show them first-hand the power of the C4C Program, and share LMM's plans for this important federal investment.

## POLICY CORNER

# It's (City) Budget Season!

Each year the City of Cleveland must pass a balanced budget, meaning that the city cannot spend more than the financial resources it has available. The city budget funds city departments, the Mayor's Cabinet, and specific policy priorities for the mayor and council. The city's operating budget does not include utilities or the airport.

The budget process takes months, with deadlines that must be met by the Mayor and City Council. The first key deadline was on February 1. On that day, Mayor Justin Bibb transmitted a \$1.8 billion, 530-page [budget document](#) to City Council. His budget anticipated \$704 million in spending and \$648 million in revenue in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. While it did not include the city's larger plans for the \$511 million allocation of American Rescue Plan funds, the budget does propose spending at least \$56 million of these funds to fill the city's funding gap.

While the budget proposal largely mirrors Mayor Frank Jackson's past budgets, there were a few differences. This includes a \$1.1 million increase for the Law Department to help with the implementation of Issue 24, the ballot initiative passed in 2021 that increases police oversight and establishes a powerful Citizens Review Board. The budget also provides a \$2 million funding increase for the Department of Public Health to create 11 new positions and launch two mobile health units.

[Refund Cleveland](#), a project aimed at making the city budgeting process easier to understand, helps to further break down the Mayor's budget. According to their website, Mayor Bibb's budget is primarily used to support policing and corrections (36%), emergency services (22%), infrastructure and housing (8%), community services (7%), environmental and sustainability (6%), health (2%) and administration, law and other expenses (19%).

The next step of the process is for [City Council to hold hearings](#) on the proposed budget. This began on February 22nd. During hearings City Council members are able to debate and change portions of the budget recommended by the mayor. City Council then publicly shares its version of the budget, which is written as an ordinance. This is considered the "second reading" of the budget. Fifteen days after the budget is shared with the general public, there is a third reading, and a vote by City Council to approve the budget. All of these hearings and budget readings must be complete by April 1.

The City Budget outlines our communities' priorities for the upcoming 12 months. However, the process can be difficult to follow, and there are few opportunities for the public to provide input into the process. To deepen your engagement, we recommended learning more about [Participatory Budgeting Cleveland](#). PBCLE has advocated for over a year to allow residents to determine how the city spends its funds. [ClevelandDocumenters](#) is another great place to go for the latest on the [city budgeting process](#).

Featured Advocacy Partner :  
ACLU of Ohio



The mission of the ACLU of Ohio is to aid in maintaining and extending constitutional and other fundamental rights and liberties through litigation, direct advocacy, and educating the public.

Understanding that power concedes nothing without a demand and that the people of Ohio want to fight for something they believe in, the Action Team is a powerful organized body of activists and ACLU supporters who work to push campaigns regionally and statewide.

Supported by regional organizers and the broader ACLU organization, the Action Team is dedicated to dismantling the current unjust structural system that works for a few to build a new one that works for all people. Focusing on training, equipping, and empowering our volunteers to act in the public arena, we work to radically change the landscape of Ohio for the better.

The Action Team volunteers and leaders tap into the resources of the ACLU of Ohio in order to advance local and statewide campaigns. Partnering with our Policy, Communications, and Litigation Departments, the Organizing team and the Action Team have powerful resources for on-the-ground success.

Our Theory of Change is: We believe if we recruit, equip and transformationally engage everyday Ohioans then we will radically shift the balance of power and win fair and equitable public policies. Join the Action Team at [action.aclu.org](https://action.aclu.org).





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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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Facebook.com/LMMCleveland



YouTube.com



E-newsletter sign-up at  
[www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org)



Latest news at  
[www.lutheranmetro.org](http://www.lutheranmetro.org)

## By the Numbers: Youth Homelessness

*COVID made tracking youth homelessness increasingly difficult, leading to undercounts. Learn more about the struggles of youth homelessness in Ohio [here](#).*

# 21,118

The estimated # of youth experiencing homelessness in Ohio during the 2020-21SY

# 2,972

The estimated # of students experiencing homelessness in CMSD during the 2017-18SY

# 359

The estimated # of students unsheltered in Ohio during the 2018-19SY

# 4,800

The estimated # of students in shelter in Ohio during the 2018-19SY

# 20,890

The estimated # of students doubled up in Ohio during the 2018-19SY

## In The News: Renters' Rights Day 1



Mayor Justin Bibb released his 2022 Transition Report in February. The report is the result of several months of conversations between the Mayor's transition team and local experts, professionals, and leaders and includes 85 specific goals for the Mayor to accomplish in his first 100 days in office.

We are thrilled to share that the report includes the Mayor endorsing *Pay to Stay* and *Source of Income legislation*. **But we still need your help.** Can you click the link below and send an email of thanks to the Mayor for his support while also urging him to quickly move this legislation forward? Endorsing Pay to Stay and SOI is a strong first step, but more must be done to ensure these critical protections are available to all Cleveland renters. We truly appreciate your support of the Renters' Rights Day 1 Campaign! And if you weren't able to make NEOCH's Renters' Rights Day 1 Teach-In, make sure to watch. It was a powerful conversation not to be missed. Click here to TAKE ACTION.

## What We're Reading

- Becoming Ms. Burton, Susan Burton & Cari Lynn
- Let's Get Free, Paul Butler
- Eloquent Rage, Brittany Cooper
- Medium: Why a new civic and social infrastructure is needed to equip Cleveland residents to hold local government accountable
- NBC News: 'Paying ransom for freedom': How cash bail is keeping Black mothers stuck in prisons