

# Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | March 2020

## SAVE THE DATE! Charles R. See Forum Featuring President Karol Mason



*Karol Mason,  
President of John Jay College  
of Criminal Justice*

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM) is excited to announce that it will be hosting the inaugural Charles R. See Forum on Re-Entry at the City Club of Cleveland on Friday, June 5, 2020. The annual forum, which is endowed thanks to several generous donors, will honor See's 44 years at LMM and bring attention to current issues in the field of criminal justice.

The forum will feature Karol Mason, President of John Jay College of Criminal Justice. President Mason was appointed to her current role in August 2017. Prior, she served as the Assistant Attorney General in charge of the Office of Justice Programs in the Obama Administration. In that role, she oversaw an annual budget of \$4 billion to support state and local criminal justice agencies, juvenile justice programs and services for crime victims. President Mason also spent three decades at Alston & Bird LLP.

The forum's namesake, Charles R. See, began at LMM in 1973 where he spent most of his career running the Community Re-Entry program. This innovative program provided services to help individuals re-entering society find stability through job placement, job training, substance abuse treatment, and volunteer opportunities. For many years Community Re-Entry included the award-winning Care Team Program, which partnered formerly incarcerated individuals with seniors to serve as safe escorts, errand runners, and companions.

While See retired in 2018, his impact on LMM remains. Through an annual event featuring innovative thinkers in the field, this forum will honor See's career while continuing to champion the policy changes needed to promote equality in the criminal justice system and ensure comprehensive rehabilitation post-incarceration.

**We hope you will join us on June 5th.  
Please email Margie Glick ([mglick@lutheranmetro.org](mailto:mglick@lutheranmetro.org))  
for additional information.**



*Margie Glick*

## From the Desk of the **Advocacy Director**

Dear Fellow Advocates,

Did you know that nearly 80% of people have already broken their New Year's resolution? If you fall into that category, I have a new resolution for you to consider. It has nothing to do with exercising and eating well, but does relate by creating a stronger and healthier community. It's a resolution to get involved civically in 2020.

2020 is a critical year to engage civically. On March 17, 2020 the Health and Human Services Levy will be on the ballot, and voters will be left to decide whether to support a .8 mill increase to the levy, which would raise an additional \$35 million annually for the county. The failure of this levy would be devastating to nonprofits like LMM that utilize county dollars to provide social services.

On April 1, 2020, the decennial census will be available to complete online. Cuyahoga County is historically a low-count county. For each under-counted person, the County loses an estimated \$1,814 a year – or \$18,140 over 10 years - in federal funding. Undercounts can also lead to the loss of federal representation. In 2010, Ohio lost two congressional seats; in 2020, we are at risk of losing an additional seat.

The culminating event is the November 3, 2020 general election which, in addition to the presidential election, may include statewide ballot issues related to increasing the minimum wage.

LMM will be tracking the policies that matter most to LMM's program participants while also engaging directly in efforts to ensure staff partners are prepared to help program participants register to vote and complete the census. If you'd like more frequent updates on LMM's advocacy opportunities, email me at [mglick@lutheranmetro.org](mailto:mglick@lutheranmetro.org) and we will make sure you have the latest information and volunteer opportunities to stay engaged this year.

Sincerely,

Margie Glick  
Director of Advocacy

## Taking a bite out of SNAP

The federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income individuals stretch their food budget and purchase nutritious food at grocery stores, convenience stores, and some farmers' markets and co-op food programs. Averaging \$126 per person per month or \$1.35 per person per meal per day, these modest benefits aim to supplement the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations including children, the disabled and the elderly. At LMM, nearly all program participants are SNAP eligible.

In 2019, there were three federal efforts to reform the SNAP program that would lead to cuts for program participants. These proposed changes, if made law, will drive more low-income individuals to utilize already strained local food banks

and food pantries, possibly driving some individuals and families to seek emergency shelter.

In partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, LMM is actively engaged in the rulemaking process. LMM submitted two comment letters expressing concerns regarding the aforementioned rules and the impact they would have on LMM participants. We also participated in a conference call with Rep. Marcia Fudge's staff to learn more about next steps in Washington, D.C.

Stay tuned to learn more about these proposed cuts and their direct impact on LMM program participants.

## POLICY CORNER

# What is Source of Income Discrimination?

The federally supported Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) is often viewed as a golden ticket for people with very low incomes who need housing. In comparison to some other housing assistance programs, Housing Choice Vouchers allow the tenant to live wherever they choose, as long as the landlord is willing to accept the voucher as a form of rental payment. Unfortunately, there is a shortage of such landlords. The gap between supply (of willing landlords) and demand (of applicants) results in a years-long bottleneck of eligible would-be voucher holders without a stable place to live. First, due to demand, there is a lottery to be put on the waitlist to be eligible for the HCVP. In 2019, **33,000 families** submitted applications to be on the waitlist and 15,000 were accepted. Once on the waitlist, a household may wait an additional several years before being chosen and awarded a voucher.

It is well known amongst residents and staff at the Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside and the Haven Home family overflow shelter that even with an elusive Housing Choice Voucher, it can remain difficult to find a place to live. One reason for this is that under federal law, source of income (SOI) is not a protected class like race, gender and sexual identity. This means landlords can legally state in all but five municipalities in Ohio "NO SECTION 8" without penalty. Landlords can also legally refuse to rent to individuals who want to pay with other non-cash sources like alimony, disability benefits and Supplemental Social Security. This restriction can make it very difficult for individuals with low incomes to find safe and affordable housing. Further, the lack of protections contributes to racial segregation, as SOI discrimination often serves as a proxy for race ([Fair Housing Center for Rights & Research](#)).

LMM is working with partners from the Cuyahoga County Housing Stakeholders' Fair Housing Working Group to educate elected officials on the need to add SOI as a protected class. By reducing barriers to affordable housing, we can help reduce rates of homelessness and promote stability amongst individuals and families. [Research](#) shows that when people have a stable, decent and financially accessible home, they are better able to find employment, achieve economic mobility, age in place, perform better in school, and improve and maintain health. This is especially important in families with young children; children in families that received vouchers moved schools much less frequently and had 16 percent [fewer absences](#) from school or childcare.

LMM will continue to provide updates regarding these efforts to end SOI discrimination. In the meantime, please subscribe to our advocacy alerts to learn more.



## Featured Advocacy Partner: MHAC

LMM is proud to be a member of the [Mental Health & Addiction Advocacy Coalition](#) (MHAC). The MHAC fosters education and awareness of mental health and addiction issues while advocating for public policies and strategies that support effective, well-funded services, systems, and supports for those in need, resulting in stronger Ohio communities.

Established in Cleveland in 2003 with 30 members, the mission of the MHAC was to provide a broader unified community voice to advocate for mental health issues and to coordinate advocacy efforts. Today, with 124 member organizations, the MHAC has become a statewide coalition with the purpose to unify diverse local voices to advocate with the goals of (1) increasing awareness of behavioral health issues that impact people affected by mental illnesses and addiction disorders and (2) advancing policies that positively impact Ohioans affected by mental illnesses and addiction disorders.

The MHAC continues to establish itself as a resource for local and state policymakers, members, and the community through its ongoing advocacy efforts, data-driven research, policy analysis, and recommendations.

The MHAC's members provide input on public policy issues and drive the coalition's local and state-level advocacy work. Any organizations with an interest in mental health and/or addiction are welcome and encouraged to join as members. Interested in learning more about the MHAC? Please email Karen Kearney at [kkearney@mhaadvocacy.org](mailto:kkearney@mhaadvocacy.org).



# Census – 5 Numbers to Know

On January 22, 2020, LMM's Advocacy Department hosted a Lunch & Learn to introduce members of LMM's staff to the 2020 U.S. Census. The lunch featured representatives of the U.S. Census and Cleveland Votes, a statewide, nonpartisan voter mobilization initiative affiliated with Cleveland Neighborhood Progress.

**\$675 billion**

the **amount** of federal funding given out annually to states and localities based on census data

**16**

the **number** of federal programs that are distributed based on federal funding (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP, Housing Choice Voucher Program)

**\$1,814**

the estimated **amount** lost annually for every person not counted

**2**

Cleveland ranks **second** to Chicago as the city least likely to count children under 5

**4/1**

April 1, 2020, is Census Day. Don't forget to complete the census!

To learn more about the census, visit [census.gov](https://census.gov) or [clevotes.com](https://clevotes.com)

## On the Ballot: HHS Levy

Every four years, Cuyahoga County residents are asked to approve one of two Health and Human Services levies. Combined, these alternating eight-year levies generate approximately \$240 million for social services programs.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, one of these HHS levies is on the ballot. If passed, the levy which includes a 0.8 mill increase would raise an additional \$35 million for critical health and human services programs. Specifically, these funds would increase funding for the county's kinship care program, restore funding for mental health services, expand universal pre-K and address the cost of inflation for all health and human services expenses.

The County's HHS programs directly benefit LMM's direct services. LMM receives more than \$3 million in funding from the County. These funds provide direct support to Men's Shelter at 2100, Haven Home family overflow shelter, the Next Steps Youth Shelter, the Chopping for Change Program, and our Adult Guardianship Services.

To learn more about the levy, visit [www.voteforhhs.org](https://www.voteforhhs.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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Latest news at [www.lutheranmetro.org](https://www.lutheranmetro.org)

## What we're reading

On January 22, the Reentry Housing Committee released its report, *[A Never-Ending Sentence, The Impact of Criminal Conviction in Project Based Section 8 Housing Tenant Selection Plans in Cuyahoga County.](#)*