

Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | May 2020

A Call to Action: The 2020 Census

Did you know that as U.S. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson oversaw the first census count? The 1790 Census took place after President George Washington's inauguration and totaled six questions. The Census was conducted by 16 U.S. Marshalls, and their 650 assistants, and took 18 months to complete. Individuals who completed the form were categorized under five descriptions - free white males of 16 or older, free white males under 16, free white females, all other free persons and slaves. The count totaled just 3.9 million people. At the time, both President Washington and Jefferson were skeptical of the count, fearing that it did not include all residents of the original 13 States, plus the districts of Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont and the Southwest Territory.

Fast forward 230 years and the United States continues to count its residents every 10 years as mandated in the Constitution. The categories have obviously changed and the operation is far more complex, but what remains are concerns of undercounting. Census undercounts have serious long-term consequences: the decennial Census is responsible for determining Congressional representation, influences the redistricting of our state general assembly, and contributes to the allocation of 16 federal financial assistance programs pertaining to housing, healthcare and education. For every person who does not complete the census, we lose \$1,800 per year for 10 years.

This year's Census is especially complex in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Completion deadlines have been extended from July 31 to October 31 and door-to-door operations suspended. Further, added stress from the pandemic may make completing the census feel inconsequential to families struggling to manage childcare, work, and meeting their basic needs. It is of little surprise that completion rates are low in places like Cleveland. According to the Center for Community Solutions, only 44% of Cleveland households have completed the Census compared to 64% of Ohio households and 49% of households nationally. We must continue to work together to increase these completion rates.

To that end, we ask you to take the following steps to help increase awareness to the Census, and ensure that our community is accurately represented moving forward.

1. Pledge that you will complete the census by texting "PLEDGE" to 614-295-9592. This effort is being led by the [Ohio Census Advocacy Coalition](#).
2. Be a "Census Hero" - talk to your friends, neighbors and family about completing the census. Post on social media or share [@LMMCleveland](#) advocacy posts. Think of other creative ways to contact people. They trust you, and you can be an advocate for the census in your community.
3. Visit <https://2020census.gov/en/ways-to-respond.html> to complete the census. It only takes a few minutes!

Together we can ensure that Ohio has the representation it deserves in the years to come!





Margie Glick

From the Desk of the **Advocacy Director**

Dear Fellow Advocates,

Outside of your annual taxes, the occasional pothole and maybe while reading these newsletters, I'd venture to guess that whether or not the government is "working" is not something typically high on your list of dinner table discussions. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed that. It can be nearly impossible to have a conversation without questions about our national supply chain, the unemployment system or workforce safety arising.

The COVID pandemic has demonstrated clearly the benefits of effective government. From our Governor cancelling major events even when politically unpopular, to our local leaders halting evictions and foreclosures, to Congress providing stimulus funding to families and nonprofit organizations, decisive action has helped to mitigate some of the most disastrous economic and health implications of COVID.

While I am grateful to see many governing victories, the COVID epidemic has also shown where government is clearly not working. In the words of Warren Buffet, "only when the tide goes out do you discover who has been swimming naked." In other words, it's only when catastrophe strikes that you see the reality of a situation. Debates over increasing the minimum wage become more real when grocery store workers, many of whom earn a wage that won't allow them to cover rent, are among the most essential employees. Conversations of housing affordability become more relevant when we are facing depression-era unemployment and the average American has less than \$400 in savings. Finally, conversations surrounding the safety of homeless shelters and nursing homes become more urgent when we see how disease transmits in a congregant care setting.

As discussions surrounding re-starting Ohio or re-starting Cleveland continue, we know that going "back to normal" is not an option. Instead, we are looking forward to create a community where government works for all, and can be a tool to promote equity and inclusiveness. While we may not fully succeed, it is important that we use this opportunity to try with the hope of providing better outcomes for all we serve.

Sincerely,

Margie Glick
Director of Advocacy

Postponed: The Charles R. See Forum

In the previous edition of LMM's *Advocacy in Action* newsletter, we were excited to formally announce the inaugural Charles R. See Forum. The forum was scheduled to take place on June 5, 2020 at the City Club of Cleveland. After conversations with both the City Club and scheduled speaker, John Jay College of Criminal Justice President Karol Mason, we have decided that it is in the best interest of the speaker and attendees to postpone the forum. We will work with President Mason to reschedule an in-person forum as soon as it is safe to do so and will share updates as soon as they are available.



Charles R. See

POLICY CORNER

The Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act

The COVID pandemic is bringing to the surface a reality known by many affordable housing advocates – that the rent is simply too high. According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition report, [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Rental Homes](#), published in March 2020 but analyzing 2018 data, the United States has a shortage of seven million rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income households (30% Area Median Income or less). In Ohio, there were 455,993 extremely low-income renter households but only 199,118 affordable and available rental units.

Since the report was published, our nation's economic conditions have sharply declined. The national unemployment rate is expected to surpass 20% (historically, for every 1% increase in national unemployment, 10,000 more people become homeless). In Ohio, more than 1.1 million have filed for unemployment since the pandemic began, and Cleveland's unemployment rate has more than doubled since December. It is of little surprise that local housing providers are seeing missed rent payment rates between 10% and 20%. National and local eviction and foreclosure moratoriums have helped stem the tide of evictions. However, many of these moratoriums are expected to expire in the coming weeks.

According to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, an estimated 395,000 households in Ohio will need short-term rental assistance totaling \$2.7 billion over the next 12 months. To address these realities, U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown (OH) and Reps. Maxine Waters (CA-43) and Denny Heck (WA-10) introduced the [Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act](#). This legislation would allocate \$100 billion to states and localities for rental assistance. Grantees could use funds to provide short- and medium-term assistance for up to 24 months or to cover up to six months of back rent and late fees. Additionally, up to 25% of a community's funds could be used for housing relocation and stabilization activities including but not limited to rental application fees, security deposits, and utility deposits and payments. Collectively, these funds would help keep people in their homes and limit the transmission of COVID-19, supporting the emerging practice of "housing as healthcare."

LMM views this legislation as critical to providing stability to those who are most vulnerable while also helping to limit a surge in emergency shelters (including those operated by LMM). To show our support for this legislation, LMM joined a coalition of nonprofit partners to send a [letter](#) this week to thank U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown for his leadership on this issue. Together, we also sent a [letter](#) to U.S. Senator Rob Portman asking for his support. We will continue to advocate for this legislation as Congress continues to debate the next federal relief package. To join us, please visit <https://sforce.co/3geLSzs>.

Featured Advocacy Partner:



LMM is proud to be a long-term partner of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank as the organization's only regional distribution organization and also serve on the Food Bank's Advocacy Committee.

Written by Kimmy LoVano, Director of Advocacy and Public Education at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

The past few months have been anything but normal at the Greater Cleveland Food Bank. Before the pandemic, the Food Bank served 350,000 individuals annually in our six-county service area. However, when businesses and schools began closing in mid-March, we saw a surge in new families asking for help. At our first monthly food distribution during the pandemic, the line of cars stretched for miles, with families waiting hours for a box of groceries.

With our incredible partners from the Ohio National Guard and Military Reserves, the Cleveland Police Department and the Ohio State Patrol, we quickly ramped up our capacity, packing thousands of emergency food boxes and distributing many of them at our weekly drive-thru food distribution. Through these efforts we have reached nearly 17,000 families who had never before asked for help.

All of this work would not be possible without our donors, 750 partners, Ohio National Guard Members, volunteers, and elected officials. Through swift action at the state and federal level, we were provided with much needed flexibility which has allowed us to serve our community safely and effectively. We are also appreciative for the temporary increases to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is the first line of defense against hunger: for every one meal provided by food banks, SNAP provides nine.

Congress has an opportunity to further strengthen SNAP in the next COVID-19 relief legislation, and we hope our Members will support a 15% increase to benefits across the board to give families more security in their monthly grocery budgets. You can learn more by visiting GreaterClevelandFoodBank.org/StrengthenSNAP or contacting Kimmy LoVano at klovano@clevelandfoodbank.org.



lutheran
metropolitan
ministry
listening. serving. empowering.

4515 superior avenue • cleveland, ohio 44103

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



@LMMCleveland



@LMMCleveland



Facebook.com/LMMCleveland



YouTube.com



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



Latest news at
www.lutheranmetro.org

Restart CLE: 5 Numbers to Know

On May 4, 2020, Mayor Frank Jackson Introduced his Restart CLE Plan using a combination of federal CARES Act funding (CDBG-CV, ESG-CV, and HOPWA-CV) as well as other pre-existing HUD funds to help keep people in their homes. Funding allocations numbers represent the City of Cleveland.

\$2.5 million

The funding allocation for special needs populations including people who are homeless and those with HIV/AIDS.

\$11.3 million

The funding allocation for rental assistance to avoid a surge of evictions over the next year

250%

During the first three weeks, United Way's 2-1-1 saw a 250% increase in requests for rental assistance.

\$500,000

The funding allocation for expanding broadband access for CMSD students

\$4.25 million

The funding allocation to meet peoples' basic need (food banks, senior services, homeless outreach)

In the News: Foster Care Funding Boost

It is important for those in the foster care system, and transitioning out of it, to be fully supported and provided with the life skills necessary to thrive in adulthood. At LMM's Next Step Program, transition-age youth (ages 16-24) gain core skills to become self-sufficient such as money management, cooking/nutrition and healthy social and recreational activities. Unfortunately, COVID-19 is making such transitions nearly impossible, leaving many of the youth we serve in a place of uncertainty.

We are grateful that the State of Ohio has recognized the challenges COVID-19 presents for these young men and women. Ohio has extended the eligibility for foster care for youth set to turn 18 during the next three months. For those who turn 21 while in the Bridges program, which helps youth 18-20 find employment and housing after foster care, they will also be provided with three additional months of support. These ideas were developed by Ohio's Youth Advisory Board, which is comprised of young people who have been in foster care, who recognize the challenges faced by youth in the foster care system. Through such thoughtful and forward-thinking policymaking, LMM is glad to be able to continue to provide much needed support to those most in need during these challenging times.

What we're reading

Let Our People Go:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/13/opinion/coronavirus-prison-outbreak.html>

