

LMM Advocacy Mission & Vision

Mission

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry's advocacy work informs systems change at the local, state and federal level by leveraging the expertise of staff and the experiences of program participants to advocate on behalf of those who are hurting to be empowered, valued, and healed. Through this engagement, LMM can continue to provide transformational services while reducing the need for safety net services.

Vision

In 2021, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry will advocate for funding that lessens the harm done by the pandemic to the communities LMM serves, for policies that address racism in all forms, and for systems change that support the following outcomes:

- homelessness be rare, brief and non-reoccurring, and that individuals who are experiencing homelessness be treated with dignity and respect. Individuals, families and youth experiencing homelessness should have access to safe shelter, behavioral health supports, and the social services necessary to move toward stability and when appropriate, independence.
- justice-involved individuals be provided second chances and that upon completion of their sentence, their rights should be fully restored. By having full and fair access to employment, housing, health care, insurance, education and civic engagement, returning citizens are able to move toward stability and normalcy.
- senior citizens be treated with respect, and kindness, and provided access to high-quality and affordable health care and behavioral health care. This is especially important for those who have limited financial resources, and are aging with a severe mental illness, or dementia or Alzheimer's.
- that recognize our nation's legacy of racism and segregation and how it directly influences policies related to housing, criminal justice & health care. To move our nation forward, we must first acknowledge our past, and craft policy solutions that both overcome this legacy of racism, and advance equitable solutions that benefit all citizens.

Through this work, in partnership with program participants, the LMM Staff Advocacy Committee, the LMM Board of Director's Advocacy Committee, and the Racial Justice Task Force, LMM will contribute to a stronger community with more equitable opportunity for all.

2021 Advocacy Priorities

Ending Homelessness

Local

- ⇒ **Eliminate discriminatory practices in housing.** LMM will work with partners to reduce barriers to housing. This includes advocating to end Source of Income discrimination, for Pay-to-Stay protections, and to advance a Fair Chance Housing Ordinance that will reduce barriers to housing for individuals formerly incarcerated.

State

- ⇒ **Increase state investment in safe and affordable housing.** Ohio's Housing Trust Fund helps Ohioans who are low-income access safe and affordable housing. The fund provides grants and loans for a wide range of housing and homeless related activities. LMM will advocate for continued support of the Ohio Housing Trust Fund.
- ⇒ **Support programming that allows foster youth a smooth transition into adulthood.** Between 40-50% of former foster youth become homeless within 18 months after leaving care. LMM will advocate for continued supports for foster youth.

Federal

- ⇒ **Advance federal legislation that promotes affordable housing.** Research shows that when people have a stable, decent, and accessible home that they can afford, they are better able to find employment, achieve economic mobility, age in place, perform in school, and maintain improved health. This is especially true during a pandemic when housing is healthcare. LMM is supportive of policies that increase federal investment in affordable housing including the Housing Choice Voucher Program and Rapid Re-Housing.
- ⇒ **Increase funding for providers of homeless services.** Federal programs including the Emergency Solutions Grant, Community Development Block Grant and HOPWA help ensure that homeless service providers are able to provide temporary shelter. As the pandemic continues, it is of utmost importance that there is sufficient emergency shelter for those experiencing homelessness, and these programs are fully funded.

Criminal Justice Reform

State

- ⇒ **Advance policies that promote equity throughout the criminal justice system.** Ninety-four percent of all people incarcerated are in state prisons and jails. LMM supports legislation that reduces rates of incarceration in Ohio, limits mandatory minimums, and provides those with underlying addictions access to treatments.
- ⇒ **Reduce collateral sanction and create smooth paths to reentry and reintegration into society.** There are 850 laws and administrative rules limiting job opportunities for Ohioans with convictions who have served their time. LMM opposes collateral sanctions that make it more difficult for an individual who has paid their debt to society to fully reenter society.

Promoting Health and Wellness

Local

- ⇒ **Support an equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine.** Black/African American and Latino members of the Cleveland community are most likely to be hospitalized or die from COVID-19. These same communities may be hesitant to accept the vaccine due to a history of discrimination and racism in the health care system. LMM will work to ensure our staff and program participants have the information necessary to feel comfortable accepting a vaccine and when available, have access to the vaccine.

State

- ⇒ **Increase protections and services for individuals who are aging and indigent.** LMM is working with partner organization to ensure there is adequate funding for adult protective services and to explore new opportunities to support adult guardianship programs across Ohio.
- ⇒ **Ensure access to health care for vulnerable populations.** Ohio's Medicaid expansion provides critical insurance coverage to vulnerable individuals. LMM will oppose efforts to eliminate access to affordable health care and mental health care.

Federal

- ⇒ **Ensure access to health care for vulnerable populations.** The Affordable Care Act provides important medical coverage to low-income and unemployed populations. LMM will oppose efforts to eliminate access to affordable health care and mental health care.
- ⇒ **Advocate for policies that reduce food insecurity.** The pandemic has worsened food insecurity in Northeast Ohio. In partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, LMM is working to address food insecurity amongst vulnerable populations including families, the elderly and those who are homeless. This includes advocating for flexibility within the SNAP program and opposing efforts that would reduce benefits.

Advancing Racial Equity

Local

- ⇒ **Racism is a public health crisis.** In 2020 the City of Cleveland and Cuyahoga County declared racism a public health crisis. Both governments are now working to identify and advance policies that would eliminate our nation's legacy of racism through systems change. LMM will support and monitor these efforts, to ensure real and sustain change.
- ⇒ **Support civic engagement.** LMM will work to ensure our program participants and staff are registered to vote and informed about upcoming elections. In 2021, this will focus on Cleveland's mayoral election and City Council races.
- ⇒ **Address institutional racism.** Through the advancement of the prior advocacy priorities related to housing, criminal justice, and health and wellness, LMM will advance key policies that break down the racial disparities most prevalent in our community.