

Advocacy in Action



lutheran metropolitan ministry | November 2022

Reflecting on This Year's Election

The Results Are In! Chris Ronayne (D) will be the newest County Executive of Cuyahoga County.

Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM) was grateful to have the opportunity to engage with the County Executive-elect in late August when he – and on a different day - candidate Lee Weingart (R), joined us for a series of visits to LMM including the Men's Shelter at 2100 Lakeside, the Youth Shelter, Breaking New Ground houses and the Richard Sering Center. The willingness of each candidate to spend their morning at LMM is evidence of the productive relationship LMM has, and will continue to have, with County government.



In October, both candidates returned to LMM for a series of forums that focused on health, human services, & critical need, and on housing and shelter. Each forum was open to the public and provided candidates the opportunity to share their vision for improving social service outcomes, lessen the demand for safety net services, and address structural inequality across the County.

In addition to these engagements, LMM provided program participants and staff several opportunities to learn about the various races and ballot initiatives and how to engage in advocacy after the election.

This effort included a program at the Men's Shelter on how to overcome one of the biggest barriers to voting for those who are housing instable - having appropriate identification. While there is little data on voting among people experiencing homelessness, research from the University of Southern California suggests that this population has a voting rate of 10%. A lack of consistent address and the inability to obtain acceptable identification are two key reasons for this low turnout rate.

Advocacy staff also provided the participants in the Chopping for Change program with information about how to advocate while incarcerated. If you are imprisoned in Ohio with a felony, you are ineligible to vote. However, you can still write your elected official to share your story and express your political views. It is important when taking such action to explain how a proposed policy change would impact you or the people you know. Fortunately, after being released from prison, and completing any post-release requirements, most formerly incarcerated individuals in Ohio regain their right to vote.



While the election results are in, work remains. Turnout rates in Cleveland (estimated at 29%) continue to lag the turnout rate in Cuyahoga County (estimated at 55%). Too many residents in the neighborhoods LMM serve do not see the value in voting. For this reason, LMM will continue to look for ways to elevate the importance of civic engagement and the power that comes from going to the polls.

From the Desk of the Advocacy Director



Dear LMM Community,

With Thanksgiving on the horizon, I am beginning to reflect on what I am grateful for in 2022. In many ways, 2022 was the first year since the beginning of the pandemic that we had a semblance of normal. More programs and activities occurred in person than on Zoom; masks were worn as-needed, rather than required; and fewer colleagues were missing due to illness. COVID-19 has definitely not left us, but we are no doubt adjusting back to some of our pre-COVID ways of life.

Being able to spend time with colleagues, partners, and program participants is so important to the work of the Advocacy Office. Through these interactions, we are able to build relationships with those who are equally committed to the work of advocacy, while also seeing and hearing firsthand the challenges facing many of those in our community.

Over the past year, the Office of Advocacy has hosted in-person programs at the Men's Shelter to share how LMM advocates for systems change, and how residents can join this effort. We also hosted the second Charles R. See Forum at the City Club, and while our keynote speaker was unable to attend in-person, there was incredible power to being in the room with the panelists, LMM staff partners, and the participants in Chopping for Change. Finally, for the first time in several years, we were able to bring candidates for local office to LMM for lengthy site visits. This will undoubtedly contribute to County Executive-elect Ronayne's understanding of the challenges facing the people we serve, and possible solutions.

The Office of Advocacy is now preparing for 2023, which will hopefully continue this trend of in-person convening and programs. We look forward to continuing to advance many of the key advocacy priorities related to housing, hiring and civic engagement in the new year.

Sincerely,
Margie Glick
Advocacy Director

The Results Are In, Now What?

Now that we are through another general election, it is time for a refresh on the role of advocacy in affecting systems change. Advocacy is defined by the Alliance for Justice as "any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others." At LMM, our advocacy tends to focus on educating both the community and those in power on the systematic issues we see. This may include communicating in one-on-one meetings, e-communications, or programs, the barriers that individuals experiencing homelessness face when looking for housing, how criminal background can keep someone from finding work, or the structural challenges that keep someone from voting in an election. It may also include participating in a larger advocacy campaign with partners to advance a specific policy change like ending Source of Income discrimination.



As an individual, we invite you to join in LMM's advocacy efforts, or adopt a different cause that is important to you. [LMM's Advocacy 101 Guide](#) will help you better understand the steps you need to take, to advocate effectively on the issues that are important to you!

POLICY CORNER

The Need for Bail Reform

Earlier this month, Ohio voters passed 'Issue 1.' Issue 1 is a constitutional amendment that would take authority away from the Supreme Court of Ohio when setting procedures related to non-monetary and monetary (also known as cash) bail and give this authority to the General Assembly. It would also require judges to consider "public safety and other factors" when determining cash bail.



Currently, lower-courts are required to consider public safety when determining non-monetary bail – like whether a defendant should be subject to a curfew, wear an ankle tracking device, stay away from certain people, or be denied bail all together. In contrast, the Supreme Court adopted a rule regarding monetary bail that required defendants cash bail to be set at a level simply to ensure that the individual shows up to their court case, not as further punishment.

The difference in such treatment is due to the fact that cash bail has been proven to have a disparate impact on low-income Ohioans and people of color. People who are unable to afford bail and are imprisoned while awaiting trial are at risk of losing their jobs, homes, and family support – all prior to being convicted of a given crime. The Supreme Court of Ohio has started to acknowledge this difference, and took steps to limit the factors that can influence how and when a cash bail is set.

With the passage of Issue 1, the Ohio legislature will take over the authority of the Ohio Supreme Court on ALL bail procedures. This is unusual as the Ohio Supreme Court determines other procedures for trial, pretrial and sentencing matters.

Because of the disproportionate impact that such changes to the bail process would have on LMM program participants and staff partners, LMM publicly opposed this amendment. This aligns with prior LMM advocacy efforts aimed at limiting the role of the cash bail system. In 2022, LMM participated in an ACLU advocacy day focused on bail reform (SB 182 and HB 315). In 2019, LMM signed on to a comment letter led by the ACLU of Ohio in support of reforming the proposed amendments to Criminal Rule 46 to make it more equitable and lessen existing inequalities in the judicial system.

LMM will continue to advocate against efforts at the state level to keep people incarcerated pre-trial, and will closely monitor the implementation of this constitutional amendment.

Featured Advocacy Partner: Towards Employment



At Towards Employment (TE), we believe candidates who come through our doors have tremendous assets. TE staff, many with lived experience and program graduates themselves, walk alongside each student to help them see that their ability to navigate through and overcome obstacles is a valuable, transferable skill.

We provide the right service at the right time, carefully aligned so candidates can advance on a career pathway. Our nationally proven model starts with a strength-based assessment, followed by a career readiness workshop, and then development of a Personal Career Map that spells out goals, and what it takes to achieve them. Goals and support relate both to life stability – like connections to childcare, housing, health care, or legal services – as well as professional development.

Using the Personal Career Map, candidates identify each barrier that stands in the way of career success, and together, we knock them down one-by-one. Moving forward often includes resources and partnerships from community partners like LMM!

Towards Employment is proud to serve Clevelanders in three locations:

-Community, Reentry, and administrative teams are at TE's new headquarters: 3301 Saint Clair Ave

-The Young Adult Resource Center are at the Ohio Means Jobs building: 1910 Carnegie Ave

-Industry Partnerships are at the MAGNET building: 1800 E63rd St.

To learn more about Towards Employment visit <https://www.towardsemployment.org/>



**lutheran
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ministry**
listening. serving. empowering.

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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.

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By the Numbers: Cuyahoga County Jail

The future of Cuyahoga County Jail remains in flux. Here are five numbers to sum up the financial and human impact of this center.

\$750 million

The estimated cost of building a new jail.

1,900 inmates

The approximate number of detained individuals it would be expected to hold.

1,436 beds

The current number of beds in the Cuyahoga County Corrections Center.

14%

The percentage of women incarcerated in Cuyahoga County with an average of 301 inmates whereas men average around 1,802.

82%

The increase in incarceration rate over the last 45 years (1,203 inmates to 2,192 annually).

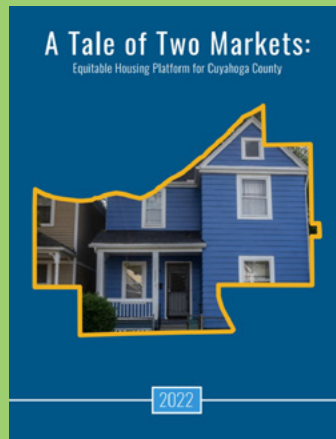
In The News: A Tale of Two Markets

In early October, the County Housing Stakeholder Group which represents a diverse group of housing and homeless services providers including LMM, released the report "A Tale of Two Markets." This report was designed to serve as a policy guide that contributes to a more stable housing market in Cuyahoga County.

The two key outcomes of the included recommendations include "the advancement of racial equity" and "increasing access to economic mobility."

The report itself is broken into five pillars: increase housing stability, reduce tax delinquency, reduce barriers to safe, quality housing, strengthen fair housing, and equitable investment in the housing market.

You can read the report here: [*A Tale of Two Markets.*](#)



What We're Reading

- [*A People's History of the United States*](#), Howard Zinn
- [*Freedom is a Constant Struggle*](#), Angela Davis
- [*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*](#), Sherman Alexie and Ellen Forney

