



For Immediate Release

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**Community Advocates Public Policy Institute
Awarded \$1 Million Grant to Address Housing**

Milwaukee—The Community Advocates Public Policy Institute’s “Healthy Housing Initiative” is one of four innovative community-based health projects selected to receive \$1 million in funding from the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), through its Community Impact Grant program.

The project was selected for its potential to drive systems and policy changes that could lead to equitable and sustainable improvements in health.

The “Healthy Housing Initiative” will pair policy advocates and community organizers at the Institute with academics at the University of Wisconsin to build a community-driven advisory council, conduct a health impact assessment, recruit and train teams of advocates from several Wisconsin communities to analyze the housing challenges affecting community health, and identify the levers various policymakers have at their disposal to increase housing affordability, quality, and stability. The project began in Milwaukee on January 1, 2018, and will expand to other counties in the state within the next five years.

The project’s manager, Mike Bare, Research and Program Coordinator at the Institute, said: “Housing is one of the most powerful determinants of health. Ultimately, we hope our work will improve the health and well-being of low-income Wisconsinites and their families. We are thankful to the Wisconsin Partnership Program for recognizing this community need and providing us with resources to improve housing policy in order to make our communities healthier.”

City of Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett praised the effort, stating: “I appreciate the team at Community Advocates and the University of Wisconsin for taking on this community-driven effort. Thousands of families in our City are looking for relief, and many want to be part of solutions like this. This campaign will not only complement our own existing work, our community will be healthier and stronger for this collective effort. We are glad to be a partner in this important work.”

Staff for the “Healthy Housing Initiative” at the Institute will partner in the project with University of Wisconsin faculty members Marah A. Curtis, MSW, Ph.D., and Geoffrey Swain, MD, MPH.

Professor Curtis, an expert on how housing policy impacts the well-being of children and families, said: “There is little argument that access to stable, affordable, and healthy housing are major well-being inputs for families. How to create and sustain these conditions, however, is more complicated and requires all stakeholders to be involved. Many different actors, departments, officials, tenants, and landlords come together in a dynamic private market to deliver a core good we all need to thrive. So, how do these various actors with differing access, roles, and investments come together to ensure the capacity for families to do the business of daily life? This project is exciting, because it allows for these various actors to reimagine the relationship of their

community roles, the quality and affordability of their housing stock, and their choice to move toward the creation of increasingly healthful living environments that benefit Wisconsin families.”

Dr. Swain, who has nearly a quarter-century of public health practice experience, and is one of the state’s top experts on social and economic determinants of health, said: “Health is more than just health care, and it’s more than just eating right and exercising. Some of the most powerful drivers of health outcomes have to do with the places where we live and work, grow up and grow old—and the policies that determine whether those places will be more or less health-promoting. Having stable, affordable, healthy housing is one of the very most important factors in determining whether children and families will be able to live healthy, productive lives.”

[Community Advocates](#) established the [Public Policy Institute](#) in 2008 to work toward preventing and reducing poverty while improving the quality of life for individuals and families in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin. The Public Policy Institute targets poverty by changing relevant public policies and laws; preventing its effects through public health efforts; and working to increase opportunity and wellness for low-income people by fostering factors related to success, resilience, and well-being.

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