

**New Community Advocates Public Policy Institute Report:
Home Is Where Our Health Is: Policies to Improve the Health of Renters in Milwaukee and Beyond
Report recommends 32 policies for creating better housing and health outcomes**

Milwaukee, February 18, 2020—Today, the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute is releasing a new report, *Home Is Where Our Health Is: Policies to Improve the Health of Renters in Milwaukee and Beyond*, in partnership with Human Impact Partners, the lead researchers on the report, and academic partners Geoffrey Swain, M.D., and Marah Curtis, PhD, at the University of Wisconsin.

Healthy housing is a basic building block for the health and well-being of people, families, and communities. This new report recommends 32 key federal, state, and local policy changes that would improve housing outcomes, advance racial and economic equity, and cultivate healthier communities. It's the result of two years of quantitative and qualitative research, focus groups, and meetings that included more than 25 Advisory Council members representing the community.

The report is focused on improving rental housing conditions by addressing three major themes: the availability of *affordable* rental housing, the *quality* of rental housing, and the housing *stability* of renters. Each of these issues has profound impacts on people's health and well-being, and they are also intricately connected to each other.

Home Is Where Our Health Is can be found at ppi.communityadvocates.net/HealthyHousing.html, which will provide:

- The full *Home Is Where Our Health Is* report with 32 policy recommendations
- Executive Summary
- Policy Briefs on four key policy issues: a right to counsel for renters facing eviction, licensing rental units through proactive code enforcement, establishing a lead-safe certification for rental units, and reforming the Consolidated Court Automation Programs (CCAP)

Home Is Where Our Health Is was inspired by the decades of experience Community Advocates has working with clients struggling with unaffordable, low quality, or unstable housing, and grew out of Community Advocates Public Policy Institute's Healthy Housing Initiative. The Healthy Housing Initiative is funded by the Wisconsin Partnership Program at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health and the Joseph and Vera Zilber Charitable Foundation.

What the Report's Authors and Partners Say about *Home Is Where Our Health Is*

The Public Policy Institute's **Mike Bare**, the project's Director, said: "In and around Milwaukee and across Wisconsin, our research unveiled a long history of policy choices that have negatively impacted peoples' health. We can and should make better policy choices that improve both housing and health in our communities. This report brings us one step closer by providing a comprehensive set of 32 recommendations that would improve housing and health."

Marah Curtis, PhD, Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor at UW-Madison School of Social Work, focuses her research on how differences in housing conditions, benefit policies, and contextual factors affect the health and well-being of families. Curtis stated: "There is little argument that access to affordable, quality, and stable housing are major well-being inputs for families. How to create and sustain these conditions 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 has brought together research findings, focus group data, and evidence from other cities contending with similar issues and recommends a collection of policies that can move us toward health in the primary space where we live our lives – home.”

Andi Elliott, CEO of Community Advocates, oversees an organization that provides vital basic needs, eviction prevention, and housing services, as well as the Public Policy Institute, which focuses on preventing harms at the community level related to socioeconomic inequities. Elliott said: “The Healthy Housing Initiative is tackling the problems that Community Advocates’ clients live with every day, problems that negatively impact their health and well-being. This report brings their concerns to light and recommends solutions that can be implemented in Milwaukee and in any community that’s grappling with how to improve their rental housing options and public health.”

Logan Harris, one of the report’s co-authors, is a researcher with Human Impact Partners, a national nonprofit that produces policy-focused research in partnership with community organizations to advance health and equity in decision making. Harris stated: “Public health research confirms what tenants in Milwaukee know very well, that living in a home that’s safe and affordable without being forced to move on a recurring basis has a profound impact on people’s health and families’ ability to thrive. There are so many opportunities to adopt and expand policies that tackle rental housing problems to improve health and advance racial and economic equity in communities in Milwaukee and across Wisconsin – they are laid out in this report for stakeholders to make informed decisions that support health for all.”

Geoffrey Swain, M.D., who has over a quarter-century of public health practice experience, and is one of the state’s top experts on social and economic determinants of health, noted: “Some of the most powerful drivers of health outcomes – even more powerful than eating right, exercising, and accessing healthcare – have to do with the places where we live and work, grow up and grow old. Those, in turn, are driven by 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.”