



Annual Report 2021

OHIO URBAN RESOURCES SYSTEM *Improving the Lives of Ohio's Urban Core*



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

My journey with Community Action Agencies began as a young, single mother. My son attended a Head Start program in Cleveland in 1993. Eight years later I became the Parent Involvement Coordinator for the directly operated program under what is now known as Step Forward.

I know first-hand the effectiveness of Community Action Agencies in the fight against poverty and for strengthening the social and economic security of families and their communities

Ohio Urban Resources System (OURS) was incorporated in 1985 to represent the needs and interests of Ohio's urban poor families and residents. Today, OURS agencies represent 56 percent of the state's total population and 62 percent of those households are living at or below the Federal Poverty Level.

For the past five years, OURS successfully:

- ★ Hosted annual conferences and training for more than 700 participants, including transitioning to virtual programming due to COVID-19.
- ★ Completed an unprecedented Vaccination PSA Campaign with 100% participation from all 11 agencies.
- ★ Launched the first-ever Ohio Urban Community Impact Report highlighting the expansion of network services over three decades to serve

not only urban populations living in poverty, but also rural and suburban populations that are increasingly experiencing poverty.

- ★ Hosted the annual OURS Anti-Poverty Summit. The event featured elected officials, community partners and the Ohio Urban Community Impact Report.
- ★ Hosted the first Virtual Fly-In Congressional event including four Congressional representatives from Ohio.
- ★ Shared leadership endeavors with community partners such as Ohio Department of Development, Ohio Legislative Black Caucus and the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies.

It is my honor to serve as the first CEO of the Ohio Urban Resources System. The legacy continues!

In Service,

Yvonne Cherell, OURS CEO



"We're all in this together." How many times have you heard that over the last two years?

During the pandemic, that phrase has meant we should pull together – and we still should. For the members of OURS, being in "this" together also means we accomplish more as a team than we ever could hope to individually.

This report demonstrates the collective impact of our member agencies. I hope you find it as impressive as I do.

As COVID relief funds began to flow into Ohio, Community Action Agencies jumped in with both feet. Since Ohio has a large number of urban centers, our concentrated population brought problems to our member agencies as well as funding intended to provide solutions. OURS member agencies were and are the conduit for those solutions.

We are known in our communities and we know our communities. Deep and compassionate service has always been Community Action's hallmark. Our mission has never been more clear: Help People. Change Lives.

Robert "Bo" Chilton, OURS Board Chair

HISTORY & PURPOSE

OURS agencies represent 56 percent of the state's total population and 62 percent of those households are living at or below the Federal Poverty Level.

The mission of the Ohio Urban Resources System (OURS) is to empower Ohio's Urban Community Action Agencies for maximum impact. We envision the Ohio Urban Resources System as a leading entity strengthening the social and economic security of families and their communities.

Ohio Urban Resources System serves as a catalyst for capacity building and advocacy within urban Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in the State of Ohio. We do this in the following ways:

- ★ Promoting smart solutions and promising practices.
- ★ Providing direct leadership development, including mentoring.
- ★ Providing direct technical assistance to CAAs in the areas of consumer input and involvement, community engagement, community assessment, organizational leadership, board governance, strategic planning, human resources management, financial operations and oversight and data and analysis.
- ★ Directly advocating and promoting advocacy of the interests of low and moderate income residents in urban and metropolitan areas of Ohio.

OURS agencies represent 56 percent of the state's total population and 62 percent of those households are living at or below the Federal Poverty Level. We seek to reduce the number of households living in poverty so that no family experiences food insecurity or housing challenges and all are able earn a livable wage.



OUR BOARD



The leaders of our member agencies comprise our Board of Directors and they elect officers from among themselves. For 2021 and 2022, the serving officers are:

Board Chair: Robert "Bo" Chilton, IMPACT Community Action Agency
Vice Chair: Jacklyn A. Chisholm, Ph.D, Step Forward
Treasurer: Sheila Triplett, Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership
Secretary: Jackie Boehnlein, Lorain County Community Action Agency

Board Members

Malcolm Costa, Community Action Akron Summit

Mark Lawson, Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action

Janice Warner, Community Action Commission of Erie, Huron and Richland Counties

Lisa Stempler, Miami Valley Community Action Partnership

Jay Black, Jr., Pathway, Inc.

Rodney Reasonover, Stark County Community Action Agency;

Van Nelson, Jr., Trumbull Community Action Partnership



OUR COLLECTIVE IMPACT

More than \$50 million in federal funds...

... for CSBG, Head Start, Weatherization and more is part of our members' annual budgets. Millions more in COVID relief funds have been entrusted to them.



More than 40,000 homes saved thanks to COVID relief programs.

Nearly 3,000 Head Start graduates every year.



Racism Declared a Public Health Crisis

Ohio has a bifurcated economy and a widening gap between the haves and the have-nots. The COVID-19 pandemic is only likely to deepen that division and dampen economic gains made since the last recession. For the past two years OURS agencies remain focused on the critical issues further exasperated by the pandemic including housing and education, access to technology, healthcare and other day-to-day resources.

In November 2021, the OURS Board of Directors responded to the call and the needs of communities it serves by declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis. We are committed to improving communities and systems for Ohioans.

Recognizing Black residents and communities of color are most impacted by challenges of inequities and systemic racism, our presence in this work will include data-driven focus on poverty, dismantling social determinants of health and best practices that elevate equity, education and economic growth.

We are committed to:

- ★ Continuing on-going racial equity and inclusion training for all network staff.
- ★ Advocating for state and federal policies and legislation that eliminates racial disparities while promoting equity and equality for Ohio's families

and residents.

- ★ Reducing barriers in state and federally sponsored programs to reach residents in slow growth communities.
- ★ Providing leadership and support for community boards, task forces and advisory groups responsible for creating and monitoring equity in healthcare, early childhood education and housing.
- ★ Implementing goals and competencies from the OURS Strategic Plan in the areas of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.
- ★ On-going leadership and representation in research and information sharing on social, economic and health disparities between different racial populations.
- ★ Promoting self-led programs that provide increased leadership skills for women, people of color and other marginalized populations within the urban community action agency network.

OURS organizations know how to connect with communities and create and implement solutions because they have been part of communities for over 50 years in most cases. This depth of community knowledge and long term and steadfast commitment is what it takes to address poverty and racism by eliminating the equity gap.

OURS RESPONDS TO COVID-19

OURS member agencies are uniquely positioned to serve Ohioans in need. COVID left hundreds of Ohioans facing eviction, foreclosure, utility disconnections, hunger and much more.

When federal and state relief dollars began flowing into communities, they flowed through Ohio's Urban Community Action Agencies. OURS members never closed during the pandemic. They adapted to serve their neighbors more deeply and

with greater compassion. They answered the call for action as they have for more than 50 years.



Community Action Akron Summit (CA) and its local NAACP collaborated with AxxessPointe Community Health Centers to provide COVID-19 vaccines at one of their neighborhood centers.

Mass sites weren't always accessible to the people who needed the vaccine the most. Devon Melton, Sr., (pictured) was able to walk only 10 minutes to the site to get his vaccine.

"Community Action came to our building and passed out the vaccine flyers," Devon said. "I knew I was finally going to get my shot from some people that I trusted and I could easily walk there."

This clinic was one of several hosted by Community Action agencies in Ohio's urban centers.

'This is life and death for many people. I want you to do all that you can to safeguard yourself and those you care about. Please take the vaccine. Please.'

-Dr. Jacklyn Chisholm, CEO, Step Forward

'People of color stand a much greater chance of negative outcomes from COVID. That makes it all the more urgent to get vaccinated.'

-Tosha Craighead, Lorain County Community Action

Support Your Community: Get Vaccinated

Even as COVID-19 made all Ohioans feel vulnerable, brave staff members at OURS agencies became even more vulnerable in an effort to save others.

Twenty-four staff members across the state – at least one from every member agency – shared personal stories about their decision to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The stories became Public Service Announcements designed to encourage Blacks and People of Color to get the vaccine.

Nearly 20% of U.S. counties are disproportionately Black, and they accounted for 52% of COVID-19 diagnoses and 58% of COVID-19 deaths nationally. The campaign was a direct response to widespread reports that these communities were disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Additionally, the campaign set out to address mistrust of the medical community which created reluctance to receive the vaccine.

This campaign took a human-centric approach telling a variety of stories with the same outcome. Individuals of all ages, education levels and backgrounds described their desire to receive the COVID-19 vaccine and/or their gratitude for having received it. They also directly encouraged others to receive the vaccine.

In selecting the individuals who participated in the campaign, a number of factors were considered. POCs who are members of the



Baby Boomer generation tend to mistrust the medical community due to past abuses. This issue needed to be addressed head on by OURS network members who were also POC and Baby Boomers.

Younger members of the network were also needed to reach Millennials who are more likely to be persuaded to get the vaccine as a way to support their community. Finally, it was crucially important that those who told their stories were known and trusted in their communities.

The resulting mix of participants provided a variety of genuine stories told from vulnerable perspectives in a powerful way. The strength and unity of communities of color, and allies among white colleagues, was clearly displayed.

The series was funded by a grant from the Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies. OURS contracted with MKG Department to create the videos. The videos were filmed both on site and remotely and released through OURS channels on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Linked In. Additionally, each agency was provided with copies of their employees' videos to share on their channels on these and other platforms. To date, these PSAs have been viewed hundreds of times.

A PSA created by Miami Valley Community Action Partnership's LaSandra James was shared by the National Community Action Partnership.



Fragility of Housing System Exposed

Renters and homeowners across the country have been threatened with eviction and foreclosure. OURS member agencies were in place on the front lines to provide help from the beginning.

Although moratoriums and forbearances bought people time, it was Community Action Agencies that pushed aid out to where it was most needed and saved homes.

Many agencies had to create new programs and add staff to respond to this unprecedented level of need. Across the state, OURS member agencies have formed a host of public and private partnerships to improve services and help people faster.

The agencies' larger than life efforts were recognized with public praise and awards. Among them, The Columbus Foundation recognized IMPACT Community Action and CEO Robert "Bo" Chilton.

MYCAP CEO Sheila Triplett received the Humanitarian of the Year Award from Youngstown's A.C.T.I.O.N. (the Alliance for Congregational Transformation in our



Neighborhoods).

Housing advocates, including many Community Action Agencies, are also working overtime to find new and better solutions for affordable housing in Ohio and around the country. Several OURS Member agencies have seats at tables around the state where new solutions for affordable housing are being crafted.

"Emergency Rental Assistance is a lifeline for many Ohioans who lost jobs or income during the pandemic, but it's just short-term relief," Bill Faith, Executive Director of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio said in a fall news release. "We also need long-term solutions to fix the affordable housing shortage so we're not stuck behind the eight ball again when the next crisis comes along."

Federal funding remains available for renters across the state.



***'For those on the frontlines of the eviction crisis, this week's theme was urgency. Last week's theme was urgency. Next week's theme will be urgency.'* - Bo Chilton, IMPACT CEO**

MEMBER SERVICES & BENEFITS

In 2021, OURS worked to maintain and expand the benefits provided to member agencies, their staff and the communities they serve.

As always, we monitored legislation, news and trends related to COVID-19 and the ways it exacerbated poverty. Our collective work to promote vaccinations brought us closer together.



We expanded our communications efforts adding regular newsletters, shareable social content and working to weave the story of our collective impact with this inaugural Annual Report.

Our record of providing strong training opportunities – even though we remain restricted to virtual events – continues. Our Anti-Poverty Summit included a stellar and well-received lineup. The cohort attending this year’s LeaderLink Summit described its messages as “right on time.” Plans are now being made to form a group of OURS member staff who will seek their Certification as Community Action Professionals.

OURS has also begun a new Strategic Planning process which will inform our organization’s direction for the next three to five years. One of the cornerstones of the new plan will be OURS first Legislative Action Agenda in 2022.

ROADMAP TEAM

Key staff from member agencies meet regularly to help guide OURS initiatives. The group plans training events and conferences as well as providing feedback from around the state. Members of the Roadmap Team are:

- ★ Shakeysta “Tosha” Craighead, Lorain County Community Action Agency
- ★ Dave Harris, Community Action Commission on Erie, Huron & Richland Counties
- ★ Rudolph Herter, Stark County Community Action Agency
- ★ Kevin Jones, IMPACT Community Action Agency
- ★ Laurice Kennedy-Brown, Step Forward
- ★ Marilyn Montes, Mahoning Youngstown Community Action Partnership
- ★ Chelsie Wilkinson, Miami Valley Community Action Partnership

MEMBER SUCCESS

Head Start Expanding at Both Ends of State

In 2021, the federal office of Head Start awarded new Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and Early Head Start Expansion funds to agencies around the country including two OURS members.

Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency and Lorain County Community Action Agency received will provide early learning and development, health and family well-being for infants and toddlers and their families.

CHCCAA plans to partner with local community and family child care providers to support better outcomes for children and families.

“The need is great and this allows us to leverage local funding to support quality,” said Renee Y. Daniel, vice president of early childhood education and director of Cincinnati CAA’s Head Start and Early Head Start program.

LCCAA Head Start will directly serve 16 more babies and toddlers opening a new center in Elyria in the fall of 2022.

“This is exciting news for families in Elyria,” said Head Start Director Shauna Matelski, Ed.D. “It is now well-known how critical those first few years are for child development and we are just thrilled to be able to serve more children.”

EHS programs recruit families with greatest need. Eligibility is generally based on family income being at or below the poverty level. Children in foster care, children experiences homelessness, and children from families receiving public assistance.



Fathers Recognized as Cornerstone

Pathway Inc.’s Brothers United Program has served Toledo and Lucas County Ohio for more than five years having helped more than 2,016 fathers who have more than 5,000 children.

The agency is committed to serving fathers in Lucas County with workshops in Fatherhood Healthy Relationships and Economic Stability. They also assist with child support - from paternity to arrears and any other barriers fathers may face. Fathers who go through the program:



- ★ Improve their job readiness skills,
- ★ Understand a healthy marriage;
- ★ Improve their financial planning;
- ★ Pay child support; and
- ★ Improve their relationships with their children.

OUR STAFF



OURS first CEO is **Yvonne Cherell**, a respected advocate of social justice, equity and fairness in the state of Ohio. Yvonne brings a wealth of expertise in leading a diverse collection of social service agencies through sustainability, greater public policy visibility and leadership. She is a member of several statewide taskforces and Boards.



A team of consultants works to support the CEO. Legislative consultant **Larry Price** has more than 30 years' experience in working with state and municipal processes, legislative and public procedures and urban community relations. Larry brings a wealth of strategic management skills involving public relations, organizational mediation, community development and domestic public policy.

Financial Manager **Anthony Redic** joined OURS in 2021. Anthony is a business professional with more than two decades of experience as a financial strategist and leadership consultant. Anthony is a valuable resource with considerable experience with developing redirection strategies and cash flow analysis. Anthony serves as a Chief Financial Officer for small businesses through his company Grow Forward.

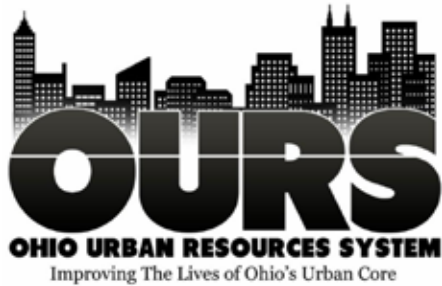
In 2021, OURS expanded its communication efforts by contracting with **Sharon Bengel** as a Content Manager. Sharon has more than 25 years experience in writing and communications and more than 10 years experience with the Community Action network in Ohio. In addition to crafting messaging, she is experienced in website management and publication design.

FINANCIALS

OURS is primarily funded by a grant from the Ohio Department of Development. Additional income is realized from member and program fees. Expenses are primarily for salaries and consultants.

Additional grants are sought as needed for special projects such as the Vaccine PSA Campaign. OURS consistently has clean audits with no findings both from independent accounting professionals and from the State of Ohio.

2021 Income	\$270,836.10
2021 Expenses	\$217,626.77



	Akron-Summit	Cincinnati-Hamilton County	CACEHR	IMPACT	LCCAA	MYCAP	MVCAP	Pathway	Stark CCAA	Step Forward	Trumbull CAP
Community Health HUB	●					●			●		
Head Start	●	●	●		●				●	●	●
HEAP	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Home Relief Grant	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Senior Services						●		●	●		
Tax Prep	●	●		●						●	
Tech Training				●	●		●	●	●		●
Weatherization				●			●		●		
Winter/Summer Crisis	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Workforce/Career Programs		●		●		●		●	●	●	

This is just a sampling of the many locally impactful programs OURS member agencies offer. Learn more about OURS and its members by visiting our website.

www.ohiours.com

