

**Metropolitan
Area
Religious
Coalition of
Cincinnati**

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American Baptist Churches, USA

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Association of Unity Churches

Baptist Ministers Conference
of Cincinnati and Vicinity

Cincinnati Conference
(Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America)

Church of the Living God

Cincinnati Islamic Center

Diocese of Southern Ohio (Episcopal)

Disciples of Christ – SW Ohio

Interdenominational Ministers Alliance

JCRC of The Jewish Federation

Ohio River Valley District
(United Methodist Church)

Presbytery of Cincinnati

Religious Society of Friends

Unitarian Universalist Council
of Greater Cincinnati

United Church of Christ

Volunteers of America
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March 6, 2015

Mr. Gregory Johnson
Chief Executive Officer
Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority
1627 Western Avenue
Cincinnati, OH 45214

Re: CMHA Annual Plan and Policies

Dear Mr. Johnson:

The Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati (MARCC) submits the following suggestions to the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority for consideration in their 2015 Annual Plan. MARCC, an interfaith coalition of seventeen denominations, made up of Jews, Muslims, Protestants, Roman Catholics and Unitarian Universalists, work together to improve policy and, in the process, civil discourse.

MARCC appreciates the efforts of the CMHA Board and staff to provide affordable housing in metropolitan Cincinnati and the difficult choices they encounter due to limited funding. All the more reason CMHA and community organizations need to work together to realize the vision of CMHA – “to shape the future by using sustainable funding models, to provide quality affordable housing solutions, in partnership with our community stakeholders”.

MARCC has been committed to and advocates for fair, accessible and affordable housing in metropolitan Cincinnati. Last year, MARCC commented on the 2014 Annual Plan, referencing MARCC’s Housing Principles that guide policy, development and funding. MARCC asks that you consider the following comments in the Annual Plan and Policies:

1) HOUSING PREFERENCE POINTS – Real progress has been made this past year by granting preference points to people who are homeless and victims of domestic violence. It is critical to continue this much needed practice.

2) RETURNING CITIZENS – There is one more category of people that need to be included in housing subsidies. Former prisoners, who have paid their debt to society, and now upon their re-entry to the local community need a place to live. MARCC requests that you include these returning citizens for housing subsidies.

3) FAIR HIRING POLICIES – Cincinnati and Hamilton County are among ten municipalities and counties in Ohio who have adopted Fair Hiring Policies for returning citizens. We encourage CMHA to use these existing policies when hiring.

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4) DEMOLITION – Last year CMHA was about to demolish 1400 plus subsidized housing units. Through discussion and input from community organizations that immediate number was reduced to slightly less than 300 units. This is progress. We thank CMHA for its effort, and we hope the number of units marked for demolition will be further reduced.

5) ONE-FOR-ONE – It is important to consider a one for one replacement policy so that when CMHA demolishes public housing they make sure to replace the units in a timely way so tenants do not find themselves at risk of homelessness.

6) DISMISSAL OF DEBT – Dismiss or negotiate debt on a sliding scale for former CMHA tenants who return and apply for subsidized housing. Many times people who are at risk need a second chance, and return in better shape than when they lost their rent subsidy. Afford them the same opportunity that you would your own brother, parent or child.

7) REFUGEES – If there are vacancies in public housing CMHA needs to make a concerted effort to reach out to refugees. Refugees arrive here as survivors of war. Though their stay may be temporary until a more permanent solution can be found, these refugees are in need of affordable housing.

8) HAMILTON COUNTY SCATTERED SITE HOUSING – The CMHA Board of Commissioners expanded by two seats in 2012, due to the passage of special legislation by the State of Ohio that focused on Cincinnati Public Housing Authority. These two additional seats are meant for Hamilton County appointments. Now more than ever, Hamilton County is in a far better position to increase their portion of scattered site housing. We ask the county make use of these additional seats on the CMHA Board by increasing scattered site housing in the county.

9) MOVING TO WORK – If the Moving to Work initiative is implemented in 2016 and for the reasons stated above, MARCC asks that CMHA staff work with a community advisory policy group. A partnership between policy experts that develops a fair housing/employment policy that serves those with rent subsidies, who will continue to need affordable rent subsidies in their transitions to work. At best, their situation is tenuous due to “last hired first fired” employer policies. A well thought out policy with flexibility, to accommodate a variety of people at risk of homelessness, is smart. Ultimately, it will save CMHA, Hamilton County and the City of Cincinnati administrative costs, and human and public service dollars.

Respectfully,



Margaret A. Fox
Executive Director