

# Dear County Executive



*Letters from Community Leaders in Cuyahoga County*



THE CENTER FOR  
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS  
RESEARCH | ANALYSIS | ACTION

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*The Center for Community Solutions believes in the power of civic engagement and strategic public policy making. It is that belief that prompted us to initiate the Dear County Executive project.*

*Within these pages you will find letters from community leaders in Cuyahoga County that highlight topics that are pervasive and important—health, workforce development, transportation, meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens, and many more. They are about current leadership and cultivating the young to be our future leaders. They address the needs of the young, the elderly, and everyone in between. Some offer specific recommendations on how to improve Cuyahoga County's health, social, and economic conditions—while others draw attention to critical issues that may not yet be on the radar screen.*

*Most importantly, they represent an opportunity for a remarkable partnership between you and the community you are leading. A partnership that could lead to real solutions to today's challenges. We encourage you to read these letters, reach out to the authors, and give real consideration to incorporating their ideas into your strategic planning. By doing so, we can move forward... finding community solutions together.*



John A. Begala  
Executive Director



Stephen J. Squeri  
Chair, Board of Directors

## **Dear County Executive:**

I serve as the CEO of one of the legendary neighborhood centers of this city / county known as East End Neighborhood House. East End has been serving city / county wide families from birth to the golden years for the past 107 years. In 1907 the Hedwig and Anna Kosbab sisters of Hungarian heritage set out to create culturally competent services by establishing East End Neighborhood House for families in need who were of Hungarian, Italian and even of Japanese heritage who lived here due to a controversial relocation program during World War II. EENH continues to be a safe haven to help individuals thrive and remain proud of their culture, while facing difficult moments of their lives that risk their livelihood and basic inalienable rights.

I am asking that you consider the legacy that neighborhood centers like East End represent to the families and future of our county by getting to know how we have stood the test of time under decades of facing many economic, governmental and societal changes. We have moved families into better state of living; upheld seniors' rights to wellness during their golden years; lead in the many efforts to keep children safe and ensure that they reach their greatest potential; and even developed leaders who now serve amongst various sectors both public and private.

When getting to know neighborhood centers like East End, *engage in really understanding the diversity of needs that our corporations face when implementing our work.* Doing more with less is not unfamiliar to non-profits however the capacity for doing more with less is a much more intricate matter than just "having heart" for service. The "doing" because we care, we do naturally. No one gets into this business of social work to catch the big break of reaching economic wealth. The reality is that regardless of heart commitment, our capacity is about running social businesses and not much different from any other corporation. While we want to "do" we cannot continue to do so under old capacity standards. Expectations from us are just as layered and diverse as any other business.

Someone could go into a county office today and receive the attention of three to four

staff members to ensure that a certain matter is handled professionally and to the expectations of the state/federal government. We all know how critical it is to have a system of checks and balances in place to make sure we are meeting our outcomes. I state we, very purposefully, because there may be a notion sometimes that in the nonprofit sector we don't practice the same operational functions of running a business. Not only are we required to meet high standards, in our world one staff often does the role of 3-4 positions. A day in the life of a nonprofit employee includes direct service to our consumers; reporting of such service, which also notifies billing; ensuring quality assurance to meet audits and monitoring visits and the effective marketing of services.

Despite the challenge of balancing so many hats we successfully remove families and individuals out of a dire state of living to a state of thriving! Subsequently new

*This county is a diverse community of different experiences. We cannot assume how a policy or process will affect another if we don't SEE each other.*

families and individuals fill in the open space for request of service. In fact, as the economy shifts, societal ills grow or evolve numbers of those served continuously increase but the capacity to serve the growth never does. Regulations often become stricter in an effort to meet economic strains while ensuring quality of services; but capacity does not equally shift. The actual cost of services provided is not fully met, and as a society we've become comfortable with shifting greater burden on the nonprofit sector, because people in the field love what they do and are used to doing more with less. Truthfully, as we work with many upcoming social workers from some of the best higher educational institutions this county has to offer we are seeing some turn away from a career they are passionate about. They, like the very consumers they protect have to go to better paying jobs outside of the field of choice to protect their own livelihood.

Thankfully, a very recent OMB Uniform Guidance policy by the federal government will begin the process of guiding the implementation of more complementing contracts for nonprofits. The regulation intends to address actual costs via administrative fees, or what's otherwise known as overhead in the corporate world. I look forward to the opportunity for our own nonprofits to collaboratively work with the county through the implementation of this policy. But beyond that is to create the space that we intentionally begin to communicate outside of the contract so that lessons learned in the process don't always have to require a federal government mandate. That we could collectively have the foresight to see that as partners we must enforce equal opportunities; that voice of those we serve can teach us all if the programs, initiatives and strategies we design on their behalf are really effective per their feedback. I wish us to create collaborations across sectors inclusive of the for profit world, there are some phenomenal worldwide efforts that we should be at the forefront of exercising.

To accomplish these collaborations, we must SEE each other. Ubuntu is a humanistic philosophy that we at East End have been learning from to work closer as partners in service of others. It requires that we see each other as viable contributors to one another's personal journey. This county

is a diverse community of different experiences. We cannot assume how a policy or process will affect another if we don't SEE each other. Cleveland is filled with local best practices, historically successful programs and institutions like East End Neighborhood House. As an out of state transplant that's lived in many cities because of my husband's service to the Navy, I can assertively state that the phenomenal work we do locally, many other states can't even begin to compare to. This is home for me now, and it saddens me when some remain unaware of such local gems. So please take the time to know us, our neighborhood centers and the neighbors we serve. As equal partners we can collaboratively and cost effectively develop local human capital sustainable beyond our own existence as leaders.



Zulma Zabala  
CEO East End Neighborhood House  
Member, Board of Directors,  
The Center for Community Solutions

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## Dear County Executive:

My name is Margaret W. Wong, and I am the managing partner of Margaret W. Wong & Associates Co., LPA, a full-service immigration law firm with over 30 years of history here in Cleveland, Ohio.

I am writing this letter to you to advocate on behalf of all the foreign-borns here in Cuyahoga County, and on behalf of all the foreign-borns who may choose to live in Cleveland in the future, depending on policies shaped by public servants like the County Executive. By the term "foreign-borns," I am referring to all people born outside the United States who make their home here.

First, a brief introduction to myself. I was born in the former British Colony of Hong Kong. I came to the United States when I was 19 years old to study at a junior college in Iowa, and subsequently completed my undergraduate studies in Illinois and my law degree in New York. When I was 26 years old, I moved to Cleveland, where I worked for a local law firm and then for Central National Bank, which ultimately became KeyBank following a series of mergers. Subsequently, I started my own law firm as a solo practitioner with one desk and no secretary. Now, more than 30 years later, our firm has a national practice with offices in seven cities, and is rated a "Tier 1 Best Law Firm" by the *U.S. News & World Report*. I sit on numerous boards, including Notre Dame College and the University Hospitals Health System, and I also serve as an adjunct professor at the Case Western University Law School.

My whole family, including my two younger sisters and my younger brother, followed me to Cleveland. I helped them to establish the Pearl of the Orient restaurants on the east and west sides of Cleveland; both restaurants are still in operation today. I met and married my husband, Kam Chan, in Cleveland, and helped him to establish a number of pharmacies that served the Cleveland community for many years. My two children, Steven and Allison, were both born in Saint Luke's hospital.

Given my extensive professional experience and deep personal connection to Cleveland and Cuyahoga County,

I believe that I am well qualified to make the following recommendations:

**1. Actively recruit global investors to bring jobs and tax revenue to Cuyahoga County through the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program.**

The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program is a program that was created by Congress in 1990 to stimulate the United States economy through capital investment by foreign investors. Under the program, foreign investors can become eligible for United States permanent residency for themselves and their immediate family provided they invest \$1 million in a business that creates at least full-time 10 jobs for United States workers. Foreign investors may also qualify if they invest \$500,000 and create 10 full-time jobs in a Targeted Employment Area (“TEA”), which generally encompasses rural areas and high unemployment areas.

The EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program represents an opportunity to bring investment dollars, job opportunities, and tax revenue to Cuyahoga County. In addition, the program can attract new generations of entrepreneurial immigrants who can help spur the County’s economy in future stages of growth. The County Executive should work closely with the State of Ohio to ensure that rural and high unemployment areas are properly classified to attract immigrant investors to Cuyahoga County.

**2. Provide county-issued photo identification to all foreign-born or international individuals who live or work in Cuyahoga County.**

Currently, progressive states like California and Illinois provide driver’s licenses to individuals regardless of their immigration status. Likewise, New York City is implementing a system to issue city photo identification to all eligible individuals, without regard to their immigration status. As it stands now, neither Ohio nor Cuyahoga County are part of this movement. Making official photo identification available to undocumented individuals contributes toward safer communities because those undocumented individuals may be able to safely apply for insurance, open bank accounts, and report crimes to the police without fear. By providing county-issued identification cards to all residents, whether with or without legal immigration status, Cuyahoga County can both set a national example for other counties and increase the safety of its communities.

**3. Appoint a liaison to work with law enforcement and social service providers to identify areas of need specifically related to foreign-borns in Cuyahoga County.**

The County Executive should appoint a liaison who can work with public and private service providers to identify areas where the county can help attract and retain foreign-born residents and workers. For example, it is a shame that although foreign-born students are given the opportunity to pay in-state tuition in Ohio, many young foreign-borns are leaving the state due to the (perceived) lack of meaningful job opportunities.

**4. Designate at least one official on the County’s payroll to work with local law enforcement to examine the effectiveness of the “Secure Communities” program and its benefits to Cuyahoga, and the negative impact on the County and its residents.**

The “Secure Communities” program created by U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”) permits



ICE to request that state and local police agencies detain certain undocumented immigrants for extra time for deportation purposes. Recently, counties in Oregon and cities such as Philadelphia have announced that their law enforcement agencies will no longer automatically accept requests from ICE to detain individuals whom they would normally release. This is part of a broader national trend that recognizes the humiliation and violation of civil rights that occurs when an individual must sit in detention for additional time, without charging documents. It further recognizes the wasteful consumption of resources where people who would normally be released (and display no threat to the public) must be further housed in detention facilities.

Embarrassingly, Ohio’s image within the immigrant community is far from stellar. Ohio is one of the leading states in the U.S. with regard to the number of individuals deported. I cringe when I hear this statistic when I am traveling around the country. The County Executive should begin to address this problem by working with local sheriffs and police agencies to examine their law enforcement priorities and financial expenditures. They will most likely find that it is in the greatest interest of county taxpayers and the general public to reduce or cease participation in the so-called “Secure Communities” program.

Although immigration is controlled by federal law and federal agencies, it is clear that policies at the county level can have a significant and meaningful impact on all foreign-borns and their communities. I hope that you will take the above recommendations to heart when considering county policies.



Margaret W. Wong, Esq.  
*Managing Partner*  
*Margaret W. Wong & Associates Co., LPA*

## ***Dear County Executive:***

While the Northeast Ohio economy is showing signs of promise, our region continues to face serious challenges. Like other parts of the U.S., our region has experienced economic growth without a corresponding increase in economic opportunity. Income inequality is growing while economic mobility (i.e. the likelihood for people to move up or down the income ladder) remains stagnant. In this environment, it is increasingly difficult for low-income individuals and families to earn enough to reach the next rung of the ladder. We have both an ethical and economic imperative to act.

Our economic problems cannot be solved through job creation alone: many metros with strong job growth have also experienced low income growth. We know that growth is systematically stronger and more sustainable in places where more people share in the opportunities being created. For our efforts to find long-term success, growth—job, income and output growth—must be combined with increased access to opportunity, the prospect for individuals to benefit from that growth based on their own effort and ability, as opposed to race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

As our County Executive, you play a crucial role in addressing these issues. The Fund for Our Economic Future, a collaboration of over 50 funders dedicated to transforming the Northeast Ohio economy, looks forward to working with you to bring both economic growth and economic opportunity to our region.

Growth & Opportunity is the Fund for Our Economic Future's approach to growing our region's economy in ways that create more opportunities for all people of Northeast Ohio. We must not only create jobs, but also prepare our workforce for the jobs of today and tomorrow and promote better connectivity between jobs and workers. Our Growth & Opportunity Initiative takes a three-pronged approach, simultaneously advancing job creation, job preparation and job access.

***We need you to work with business, philanthropy, higher education, and the social sector to chart a course that integrates economic growth with economic opportunity.***

You—more than anyone else—stand at the nexus of growth and opportunity, playing a pivotal role in economic development, workforce and infrastructure, with the ability to pursue solutions that bring the center city and suburbs together around common objectives.

Our County and region should be proud of the economic progress we are making. However, across Northeast Ohio 200,000 people—or 1 in 20—are living in low-income neighborhoods where less than 65% of working age people are either working or looking for a job. Half of that number lives in Cuyahoga County. These individuals are frequently left out of monthly jobs and employment reports.

Economic disconnectedness is a social tragedy that strikes at the heart of a nation of opportunity and justice. It is also an economic obstacle for our continued economic recovery. A recent research report by Standard & Poor's concluded income inequality discourages trade, investment and hiring. It goes on to state that "a rising tide lifts all boats, but a lifeboat carrying a few, surrounded by many treading water, risks capsizing."

We need you to work with business, philanthropy, higher education, and the social sector to chart a course that integrates economic growth with economic opportunity. You must help us to cross the boundaries—geographic, sectorial and racial—on what jobs we seek to create, how we prepare our residents to meet the needs of employers, and where we encourage businesses to locate.

Two immediate opportunities exist for you to demonstrate the efficacy of a shared Growth and Opportunity agenda. The first is a skills-based hiring initiative. We have heard for years about the mismatch between worker supply and company demand. One possible solution is to change the way employers screen job candidates. Cuyahoga County will be a test site for a skills-based hiring program successfully launched in New Mexico. The pilot project found that skills assessments are five times more effective as a predictor of on-the-job performance than educational degrees alone, and they can dramatically increase the pool of candidates considered for employment. Case studies from employers who have incorporated skills-based hiring into their practices show a 70% reduction in cost-to-hire and 50% reduction in time-to-train.

A number of local community partners are rallying around this initiative because, while our region currently lags in rates of educational attainment, our residents are more than capable. This initiative has the potential to connect many more of them to good jobs. We need you to champion this effort and – if it is successful – help us ensure that skills-based hiring becomes an important way for our region to do business.

A second example is Opportunity Corridor, a once-in-a-generation chance to reimagine our community and bring jobs to those who need them most. Roughly half of the population of Cuyahoga County residents who live in economically distressed neighborhoods live within two miles of the corridor. Individuals in these neighborhoods often have to travel 10 to 20 miles or more to where the jobs are located, a situation exacerbated by a lack of public transportation to many of the job sites. Places like Milwaukee and Philadelphia have begun to create 21st century "reindustrialization" corridors across large landscapes in blighted areas. You should work with neighborhood residents, community development corporations, the business community, transportation planners, mass transit, workforce intermediaries, public artists, and others to ensure that this multimillion project catalyzes a new era of urban economic growth over the next 20 to 25 years.

While making progress against these two tangible projects, we also ask that you champion the idea that "place matters" and that Northeast Ohio needs a smarter form of regionalism than our current path. The Vibrant NEO 2040 Initiative highlighted the perils of our current development path, forecasting significant financial impacts across the region, in which "the most fiscally strong county in 2040 [would be] weaker than the weakest county today." This initiative, which we were proud to have helped organize, included public leaders from across Northeast Ohio in economic development, infrastructure planning, environment, and housing. They laid out a number of recommendations for changing our trajectory and ultimately creating a region that is "competitive, equitable, healthy, balanced, prudent, and connected."

We hope you can work with officials at the local, county and regional levels to implement those recommendations. But

more generally, our community needs you to be a visible, public leader on the issues of sensible economic growth and infrastructure investment, helping citizens in our center cities, inner- and outer-ring suburbs, and rural areas share a common destiny. We can and must come to collectively smarter decisions on how we spend taxpayer money.

Through collaboration, we have the opportunity for win-win solutions that can result in greater economic competitiveness, lower taxes, higher quality of life, and greater economic equity. The status quo pulls us apart; we need you to bring us together and to reach out to leaders within and beyond Cuyahoga County lines.

We are ready to join you in the quest for opportunity-rich economic growth by supporting and adopting collaborative approaches that advance job creation, job preparation and job access.



Bradley Whitehead  
*President, Fund for Our Economic Future*



Deborah D. Hoover  
*Chair, Fund for Our Economic Future  
President and CEO,  
Burton D. Morgan Foundation*



## **Dear County Executive:**

As you prepare to assume office in just a few months, I am writing you concerning the issues facing our first-ring suburbs.

Over 38% of the population of Cuyahoga County resides in one of the 19 communities boarding Cleveland. The success of these first-ring communities is critical to the success of our County and region. Thus, I would like to make you aware of some of the challenges our first-ring suburban communities are currently facing.

First and foremost, our communities have faced drastic cuts in funding from both the state and federal level. Over the past four years, the state has dramatically reduced our share of local government funding and has eliminated multiple revenue sources our communities had traditionally relied upon. From a federal perspective, many of our communities do not qualify for federal funding on a regular basis and are forced to compete with our neighboring communities for the small amount of federal funding the County is able to make available.

First-ring communities such as South Euclid have worked to hold their own during this crisis. We have implemented many innovative programs, such as our Green Neighborhoods Housing Initiative and the creation of an affiliate non-profit community development corporation, One South Euclid. These innovative programs have allowed us to weather the economic crisis through improving our housing stock and implementing programs to bring commercial development to our city.

However, there is much more to be done. With little hope of increased funding from the state and federal level, it is the County which must play a central role in ensuring the success of our first-ring communities.

***Future policy decisions need to be made with the intent of equally benefitting both the City of Cleveland and the surrounding suburbs.***

The County can work to develop programs which directly benefit the first-ring suburbs. Under the current administration, the County made much progress in developing a county-wide economic development policy. This policy has manifested itself as the Western Reserve Economic Development Fund. Unfortunately, the fund cannot currently be used for renovations in retail districts. In our first-ring suburban communities, the limited commercial areas we do have tend to be older retail districts desperately in need of revitalization. Expanding the scope of the Western Reserve Fund to include retail district renovation could finally provide the incentive property owners/developers need to make a significant investment in our communities. As it stands right now, there are few programs, if any, available to encourage reinvestment in these obsolete commercial areas. The County has the opportunity to change this.

While developing and continuing to improve upon a county-wide economic development policy is important, it is also of critical importance that a county-wide housing policy be adopted. Housing, especially in our first-ring suburbs, is our most important industry. Without quality housing stock, it makes it very difficult to attract the talented individuals we need to ensure our region is able to thrive. The First Suburbs Consortium has prepared a draft proposal for a county-wide housing policy which has been shared with the current leadership. Members of the Consortium, including myself, would greatly appreciate the opportunity to share our proposal for a housing policy with you.

In addition, future policy decisions need to be made with the intent of equally benefitting both the City of Cleveland and the surrounding suburbs. A successful Cleveland should lead to a successful region. However for that to be true, as is illustrated above, the suburbs also have critical infrastructure, housing, and economic revitalization needs which must be met. As new funding sources become available in the future, such as the casino revenue and the bed tax, I hope there is a focus on ensuring some of these dollars find their way back to the first-ring suburbs, so that all County residents benefit equally.

As you assume office, I wish you the best of luck. I am always available to discuss any of the above ideas with you in greater detail.



Georgine Welo  
*Mayor, City of South Euclid*

## Dear County Executive:

Congratulations! We are very excited about your election to this very important position within Northeast Ohio. As you are aware, Cuyahoga County has been experiencing many exciting opportunities bringing the county positive publicity and improving its economic development.

While we understand that it is critical for you to meet with corporate and business leaders, government officials, and wealthy residents, we ask that you please take the time to visit our struggling urban neighborhoods in the county, too. In particular, we would like you to visit the community based organizations and neighborhood centers, many of which have been community anchors in Cleveland for decades. These organizations serve the poorest residents of our county by providing numerous social and related services, like early childhood education and out-of-school time programming; but government funding has dwindled despite rising costs, and today they face serious challenges with raising the revenues necessary to maintain and expand their programs. Even local foundations have begun to deemphasize funding these organizations, and community leaders are expressing concern. We're counting on officials like you to support these organizations with a compassionate voice.

A second, special segment of our population that deserves your attention is the youth in the county who graduate from high school and enter the workforce directly. These are the young men and women who do not enter the military and are not college bound. They may lack the grades or aptitude for college, or they may simply be unable to afford the tuition. Many of them struggle as they look for work or move from low wage job to low wage job. We would like you to share our commitment to helping these youth onto a path where they can gain needed skills and obtain much needed jobs with a living wage.

We need you to be a real leader; someone who is willing to guide the county by engaging all of its municipalities and the glorious diversity of our county residents to advance our growth collectively. We would be pleased to work with you and your staff in addressing the priorities we raise. We wish you success in your new position of leadership.



Allison L.E. Wallace  
Executive Director  
Neighborhood Centers Association

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## Dear County Executive:

Benjamin Franklin once said "Without continual growth and progress, such words as improvement, achievement, and success have no meaning."

I appreciate that you are willing to serve your fellow citizens through elected office. I know the value that you place on family and giving back to the community. So, thank you!

I write to you as a longtime resident of Cuyahoga County, someone who made a conscious decision to remain here to raise my family, and as a civically engaged citizen.

I also write to you as a member of the Millennial generation. According to the US Census Bureau, our generation is over

80 million strong, and according to the US Chamber of Commerce, we are the largest cohort in history.

It will be vital that the Administration actively aim to shape a county government that strives for fiscal responsibility and a shining example of innovative approaches to complex issues. It should be one where today's solutions may be very different from those that solved similar problems that we faced 20 years ago. By doing so, you will help to protect against short term successes, that could become long term nightmares for future generations.

I cannot speak for everyone, but I want to share some personal topics of interest that I hope will lead to action in your administration.

### Public Transit

Many adults locally are utilizing public transit as their primary method of transportation. In fact, according to the U.S. PIRG Education Fund and the Frontier Group, nationally, 16 to 34-year-olds drove 23 percent fewer miles on average in 2009 than in 2001. Over that same period, the number of passenger miles traveled per capita by 16 to 34-year-olds on public transit increased by 40 percent. According to the Cincinnati Business Courier, citing data from the Federal Transit Authority (FTA), the state of Ohio provides among the least amount of funding for its regional transit authorities of any state in America. Cuyahoga County must take a leadership role in increasing funding for local public transit, as we are home to the largest public transit system in the State of Ohio. I strongly urge you to identify more methods of funding, such as casino revenue or hotel bed tax, to support RTA that can complement money that they currently receive from the sales tax.

### Mental Health

According to the 2012 Community Health Needs Assessment, in Cuyahoga County, adults ages 25-34 had the highest suicide rate. In addition, the Cuyahoga County African American male age-adjusted suicide rate consistently exceeded the African American female rate from 2000 to 2008. As County Executive, I urge you to fight for people, regardless of age or culture, who struggle with mental illness and suicide, and address demographics where data shows are more vulnerable; such as the aforementioned groups and those going through the criminal justice system or returning from incarceration.

### Infrastructure

**Physical** - With less money coming from the state, more and more burden is falling on cities to maintain roads and infrastructure. I urge you to take a leadership role in working with cities to identify solutions that can reduce the amount of potholes from forming in the first place, either through stronger materials or with creative solutions on treating roads when covered with snow and ice.

**Technological**- The future of our community lies in not only our physical infrastructure, but also our technological infrastructure. Cuyahoga County is very fortunate to have a lot of great technological infrastructure in place that will support events such as the Republican National Convention. As a county, we must be a place that not only keeps our county in the same technological discussion as other areas, but ensure that we become the national best practice. **Safety**- Cuyahoga County Sheriff's deputies do an outstanding job of keeping us safe. With strong privacy policies in place, body worn cameras can be an effective way to maintain that relationship with the public. Cuyahoga

County can be a national trendsetter for counties nationwide. Cities in Texas, California and New Mexico have already begun using this technology. According to the New York Times, in the first year of use in Rialto, California complaints against the officers fell 88 percent. Use of force by officers fell by 60 percent over the same period.



### Employment and Entrepreneurship

The unemployment rate for young adults is twice the national average. No doubt, public policies such as retire/rehire contribute to this statistic. Additionally, since more young adults are turning to entrepreneurship, there must be public support for entrepreneurs and professional growth. I urge you to work with the community who can help you in creating an ideal destination for young adults who want to succeed professionally.

### Innovation

I would encourage you to make community engagement a top priority in your Administration. One such engagement idea is an Innovation Page, whereby citizens are able to submit ideas online and website visitors can read what others have submitted. These innovation ideas could be used as an idea generator for your administration on how to tackle tough solutions, or some type of Innovation Prize Contest. Just as important, however, is to incorporate the best of those ideas into action and update constituents along the way.

### Transparency

I applaud the county for posting all of the Boards and Commissions online, identifying which Boards have vacancies and enabling an application that can be filled out online for people interested in serving. It is my hope that cities follow your example, as a way to raise awareness of public service through Boards and Commissions. I encourage you and County Council to establish a Task Force, or partner with the Sunlight Foundation, that can identify ways that government can be even more transparent, more accessible, and more efficient using open data and information as a way to build trust with the public.

I stand ready to work with you to move Cuyahoga County forward.

I am excited about the future and the best is yet to come!



William Tarter Jr.  
Cleveland Young Professional

## Dear County Executive:

Cuyahoga County has a long history of supporting hunger relief. Currently, \$1.1 million dollars from the County provides food for 33 emergency feeding programs in our community. The County has supported these programs at this level for many years and the programs depend on those dollars, which have helped them feed the poor for decades. All of these funds are used to procure food very cost effectively through the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

But the recession has changed the face of hunger, driving more and more people to hunger programs throughout our region and generating increased need for programs in suburban areas. Meeting this need requires creativity and new initiatives, and a more effective approach to feeding the hungry in Cuyahoga County. We believe it is time for the County to consider substantial additional funding to help more agencies throughout our County provide nutritious food for families who need assistance.

Despite the hard work of so many people and organizations over the years, the problem of hunger is a growing one. In 2000, 397,268 (29.1%) Cuyahoga County residents qualified for emergency food assistance from local food pantries, mobile pantries, and hot meal programs. Today, more than one in three Cuyahoga County residents (468,221 – 37.8 percent) qualify. However, the County’s funding for hunger programs has not increased in recent years.

From 2007 to 2013 the Food Bank increased its annual food distribution within Cuyahoga County from 17 million pounds to 29 million pounds; an increase of 71%. The generosity of our community, and the hard work of our partner agencies and programs, made it possible to ramp up our efforts quickly during the recession. Within the same time period, from 2007 to 2012, SNAP (food stamp) usage in Cuyahoga County suburbs increased 80%! We have made SNAP Outreach a key priority in our work and value our partnership with the County which allowed us to complete 9,825 applications for local residents last year. However, 48% of food insecure people in Cuyahoga County do not qualify for SNAP, and have only emergency food programs on which to rely. Furthermore, rising food prices have a significant effect on food insecurity. Between 2000 and 2012, there was a 39% increase in the food price index, with the biggest increases in grocery prices from 2007 to 2009.

*Hunger has spread to the suburbs, and shows no signs of subsiding.*

Further exacerbating the demand was the expiration of a temporary American Recovery and Reinvestment Act increase to SNAP benefits that expired last November, resulting in a reduction for all SNAP households. In Cuyahoga County the cuts will amount to more than 13 million meals lost over the course of one year. To put this into context, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank and our 361 Cuyahoga County member agencies and programs provided food for about 24 million meals last year. The Governor’s rejection last fall of the waiver of the work requirement for childless adults to receive SNAP benefits, offered to states in times of high unemployment, resulted in more than 10,000 people in Cuyahoga County losing SNAP benefits altogether, further adding to demand at hunger programs.

Although the recession is over for some, the effects are still being felt by many in our region. Residents who formerly had good paying, middle class jobs are now working low-wage jobs to get by. Mid-wage occupations accounted for 60% of job losses during the recession, but only 22% of job growth during the recovery. For example, Cheryl, a 54 year old who contacted our Help Center told us "My husband went from \$17/hour to \$8/hour and from more than 40 hours per week to just 24 hours per week. All of our bills are behind or in collections. I work 33.5 hours a week at \$7.95 per hour... we have neglected to eat and pay necessary bills."

*Food is the most basic of human needs, essential to health, to the ability to think, to learn, to work and to play.*

In addition to the growing need for food, we also responded to the growing demand in the suburbs, from people who had not been in need before. Additional programs and mobile pantries were part of the solution. In 2007 there were some emergency feeding programs in mostly inner ring suburbs, but the majority were in the City of Cleveland. Of the 33 hunger programs currently receiving County funding, 67% (22 agencies) are in Cleveland and 33% (11 agencies) are in the suburbs. There are 328 additional food pantries, hot meal programs, and mobile pantries not receiving County support and, of these, 236 are in Cleveland and 92 are in the suburbs. Hunger has spread to the suburbs, and shows no signs of subsiding. In light of these developments, the County should consider making any additional County funding for hunger relief available to help some or all of these additional programs.

Food is the most basic of human needs, essential to health, to the ability to think, to learn, to work and to play. The County has acknowledged this with its support of emergency food programs through both the budget and its leadership in the annual Harvest for Hunger food and funds drive. Yet there is so much more that needs to be done. Additional funding from the County is needed to help with the challenges created by the recession in Cuyahoga County beyond just the City of Cleveland.

We look forward to working as your partner to provide nutritious meals to even more Cuyahoga County residents in need.



Shirley Stineman  
Board President



Kristin Warzocha  
Vice President of External Affairs  
Greater Cleveland Food Bank

## Dear County Executive:

Congratulations on your well-fought victory. Navigating the political process (especially in Cuyahoga County) to get to where you are is no small feat and it is a testament to your fortitude that you can claim victory in a county wide general election!

But now the real work begins. The reason you ran is now at your doorstep--to govern the most populous county in the State of Ohio. A significant opportunity lies ahead. It is a fair statement to say that the first four years of the new county government was a successful venture for both the county executive and the county council, both of whom worked diligently to ensure a transition that served the people of Cuyahoga County well. However, it was not perfect, nor was it expected to be.

In my role as a housing advocate who works with both landlords and tenants alike to create stable housing situations for residents, I have had the opportunity to work with the Office of Homeless Services and the Office of Community Development. There are many highly efficient, intelligent, innovative employees working in both offices--too numerous to count. These are the employees, more than any other county office, who execute the social service programs funded by taxpayers' dollars. They ensure the revenue is spent wisely and that the programs implemented are sound, solvent, and fair. And they do this all while working to advocate and make life better for the least among us in Cuyahoga County. I implore you as our county executive to ensure these employees know you have their back every day of your tenure as county executive. This needs to manifest not only in allocated resources, but in a recognition of the work they do every day.

*I hope you will consider the implementation of a county wide housing trust fund--a mechanism used in countless other cities and counties to ensure residents have stable housing.*

Another office that has highly capable individuals working judiciously with the resources at their disposal is the Offices of the Fiscal Officer. To anyone who has knowledge of the blight that has plagued Cuyahoga County post 2008, the deficiencies of the Fiscal Office are painfully obvious, including a non-functional rental registry. The minutia of the issues with property transactions are numerous, but simply put, they enable fraudulent landowners to go undetected and uncaught. Unpaid property taxes go uncollected and landlords are able to hide in plain sight in the current bureaucratic system. Numerous public officials, non-profits, and think tanks have provided ample guidance on reform, but a lack of political will has hindered progress. I ask you as county executive to make reform in the fiscal office a priority.

One very exciting and innovative program started in the first term of the county administration was the use of *Social Impact Bonds*. Cuyahoga County issued the first RFP for these bonds in 2012 and the new program, known as "Pay for Success," is currently under legislative review. This could potentially be the future of funding for social programs and I urge you to continue this work. It is a long-term proposition and the only way to truly measure its success is to maintain the same level of commitment in the years to come.



Finally, I hope you will consider the implementation of a county wide housing trust fund—a mechanism used in countless other cities and counties to ensure residents have stable housing. The state and national funding through tax credits for housing projects is ever-decreasing, and a locally-controlled housing trust fund can act as a much-needed supplement to housing projects that serve seniors and the disabled. There is a critical shortage of accessible housing for the physically handicapped and this trust fund could incentivize accessible retrofitting to our ample single-family and double-family housing stock in Cuyahoga County. The trust fund could help the unemployed and the underemployed as a mechanism to prevent homelessness. The possibilities are ample, and it is political will that can make it happen. I can personally attest that the housing advocates of Cuyahoga County are lined up to help in the process!

This is a lot to take in, and you've come this far. I wish you the best of luck in your first term as county executive, and know that we are rooting for your success and are willing to help and support you.



Angela Shuckahosee  
Executive Director  
Cleveland Tenants Organization



## Dear County Executive:

Thank you for your commitment to serving the citizens of Cuyahoga County. At present, our county receives approximately 4,500 individuals returning to our community after a period of incarceration. While the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry has made great strides in securing services for persons returning home from prison, there remain many obstacles which challenge their successful reentry into the community.

It is the hope of the thousands of formerly incarcerated citizens of Cuyahoga County, and their supporters, that the county executive will continue a zealous initiative to reduce barriers and ensure that individuals receive the second chance that each person deserves.

Obtaining employment for returning citizens is a major need and a major barrier. The current county policy to "Ban the Box" from county employment applications was a great step toward allowing qualified individuals with records an equal opportunity to obtain jobs within the county. I would like to see the county use its influence to encourage other businesses, especially those seeking to do business with the county, to "Ban the Box" on their employment applications as well and offer incentives to businesses for hiring formerly incarcerated persons.

The county could offer a Tax Credit per employee, to employers hiring a qualified person who had been previously convicted of a felony offense. Several states and counties offer tax incentives and bonding programs to employers hiring people with criminal records. Our Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry was the first county government reentry office established in Ohio and now leads the nation with progressive reentry initiatives serving returning citizens.

As County Executive, you will have a great opportunity to further the reentry advancements already made in our county by expanding the scope of county resources being made available to those seeking a second chance. Needless to say, employment is one of the great factors contributing to public safety and reducing recidivism.

*Continue a zealous initiative to reduce barriers and ensure that individuals receive the second chance that each person deserves.*

Obtaining housing is another significant barrier confronting returning citizens. Unwarranted discrimination based on a criminal record is, unfortunately, widespread across our county. Persons with records often have their housing applications summarily turned down for no other reason than they have a previous conviction. Stable, affordable housing for returning citizens is another significant factor in reducing recidivism and increasing public safety. The county could incentivize local housing programs that make housing options available to persons with records. Landlords who rent to persons with records could receive a tax break, and the county could work with local groups made up of returning citizens (there are several groups seeking such opportunities) to rehabilitate properties in the county land bank that would be rented or sold to returning citizens.

*Community Re-entry Inc. (CR) is an independent subsidiary of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM). To address affordable housing initiatives, CR works with LMM's Men Homeless Shelter on an affordable housing pilot for veterans, currently using a house formerly owned by the land bank in an arrangement similar to that suggested above. The Shelter hosts thousands of men each year, a significant number of which are formerly incarcerated citizens returning to Cuyahoga County. Together we place a priority on solutions to homelessness through direct service and case management. The Shelter has garnered a reputation for providing welcome for people who feel unwelcome in other places. This includes many persons with sexually oriented offenses for whom housing is the most difficult to locate based on actual restrictions placed on them as well as social stigmas. We feel the county could do more to humanely address what is an increasing crisis and to develop suitable housing for this population of individuals.*



Of the 4,500 persons reentering Cuyahoga County each year from state prisons, it is estimated that 54% of them have less than a high school diploma and up to 63% have had no formal training for job skills. Such statistics suggest that the county's workforce development department can play a very important role in training persons who need and desire to acquire job skills in order to become gainfully employed. The

Greater Cleveland community has an aging workforce and a declining pool of skilled workers to replace those leaving the workforce.

*You will have an extraordinary opportunity to re-imagine what is possible between county government and those individuals returning to the community after a period of incarceration.*

A job training program operated or funded by the county or a collaboration between the county and the private sector could provide training for thousands of workers ready to join the workforce with skills to meet the demands of today's job market. When working people have a stake in the system, public safety is increased and citizenship maintained. I encourage you to explore ways that the county can increase its workforce development training efforts among the reentry population.

As County Executive, you will have an extraordinary opportunity to re-imagine what is possible between county government and those individuals returning to the community after a period of incarceration. In a new paradigm, county government can become a catalyst for serving the hurting, forgotten and oppressed, and offer a true second chance to those seeking to begin anew. I thoroughly understand that county government is not the panacea for all the needs of the reentry community; however, it has a significant role to play in bringing about hope, meaningful change and real opportunities for returning citizens.

Paraphrasing the philosopher Fyodor Dostoyevsky: "you can judge the humanity of a society by the way it treats its prisoners." I believe the humanity of my neighbors in Cuyahoga County is large enough to allow those who have fallen down to get up and begin again, renewed and recommitted to building right relationships with their neighbors. I invite you to join the citizens of Cuyahoga County in building a community where everyone has an opportunity to share their gifts and receive the help of a caring community.



Charles R. See  
Executive Director  
Community Re-Entry Program  
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry

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## Dear County Executive:

As I write this I am struck by the fact that arthritis is too serious to ignore. The #1 cause of disability in the United States is arthritis. Yes, arthritis.

And arthritis is not simply a disease of growing older, an inconvenience borne by the elderly. Arthritis affects people of all ages, even infants, young children and teens. Today about two-thirds of people diagnosed with arthritis are under the age of 65.

Arthritis is a complex, serious, progressive, painful and incurable disease. It results in a total of 67.3 million missed

workdays annually – that's nearly three days for each of the 45 million employees with arthritis.

Arthritis affects every racial and ethnic group including more than 34 million Caucasians, more than 4.6 million African-Americans and nearly 3 million Hispanics.

In Northeastern Ohio nearly 1.3 million people of all ages have been diagnosed with arthritis. That's enough people to fill First Energy Stadium nearly 18 times!

The impact of arthritis is staggering.

- Arthritis costs the United States economy more than \$128 billion annually in lost wages, productivity and medical costs. Osteoarthritis is one of the most expensive conditions treated in United States hospitals just behind septicemia, according to 2011 data; osteoarthritis is one of the most costly conditions billed to private insurance just behind live birth.
- More than 50 million Americans have been diagnosed – that's one in five - including 300,000 children.
- By 2030 an estimated 67 million Americans will have arthritis.

By sharing these sobering statistics about impact and prevalence we hope you will take a leadership role in raising arthritis awareness.

Because the data outlined above are mirrored locally.

**People with arthritis are in pain.** When people hurt they often cannot work. Cuyahoga County - and all of Northeastern Ohio - needs its workforce to be dependable. Pain from arthritis shouldn't be keeping people from critical jobs that county families depend on.

Often people are reluctant to see a doctor when they have joint pain. They say, "It's just arthritis." Or "It's arthritis and there's nothing that can be done." These two statements are at the very heart of what the Arthritis Foundation is working to change. We work daily to bust the myth that arthritis is an inevitable part of growing older. And we work diligently to educate people about arthritis and that much can and is being done to improve the lives of people dealing with the disease.

**Arthritis is a serious disease.** Nationwide, research is being conducted to find a cure for arthritis. Our local research and medical institutions in Cuyahoga County and Northeastern Ohio are hubs for orthopaedic and rheumatologic care. Eleven states in the country have NO pediatric rheumatologist to serve their states' kids with arthritis. We have four pediatric rheumatologists in Cuyahoga County alone!

People with arthritis in Cuyahoga County need the county executive to:

- Encourage employers to offer workplace wellness programs – like the Arthritis Foundation's Walk with Ease program – that address the needs of employees with arthritis.
- Raise the volume on the local discussion about arthritis and its impact by holding a seminar with the medical community for business leaders about arthritis and its costs. Tell the county that arthritis is a serious disease.
- Connect school districts to address the needs of children with arthritis in their schools. Often children with arthritis don't look unhealthy and are embarrassed to disclose to

teachers and peers that they have a disease often associated with aging.

- Challenge county residents to walk to improve their health. Many people who have arthritis have comorbidities like obesity or diabetes. Exercise is one of the best ways to manage arthritis pain. Walking is one of the best ways for people with arthritis to exercise.

Learn more at [www.arthritis.org/ohio/neo.php](http://www.arthritis.org/ohio/neo.php).

Arthritis is top of mind for us; we urge you to make it the same for you.



Darby Bentoff Schwartz  
Division Vice President  
Arthritis Foundation, Great Lakes Region,  
Northeastern Ohio



## Dear County Executive:

In 1916 leaders from the region's hospitals came together to establish the Cleveland Hospital Council, today known as The Center for Health Affairs. As the first regional hospital association in the nation, the Cleveland Hospital Council was groundbreaking: it created collaboration in an industry known for intense competition, it was the site of the first American Hospital Association meeting, and it established a set of tenets to guide the organization in improving health that still resonate in our community today.

In welcoming you to your new position as county executive, I thought it would be an opportune time to point out one such founding principle that might have particular meaning to you. Nearly 100 years ago our founding members included as part of their main purpose the following:

*Cooperate in urging the municipal, county and state authorities to assume their full responsibilities toward the sick and for the removal of conditions which are responsible for sickness and injury.*

Though the language is a bit dated, the sentiment is still true. The Center for Health Affairs works with its member hospitals to advocate at the city, county and state level for policies that improve the health of the greater-Cleveland community. But what does that mean from a practical standpoint and why does it matter for the county executive? Here are three points I'd ask you to keep in mind as you take the reins of the county.

### 1. Make population health a priority.

Whether or not your career plans included improving the health outcomes of your constituents, as County Executive, the capacity to do so now rests in your hands. Population health encompasses the notion that health outcomes of a given population, such as Cuyahoga County residents, can be influenced by a variety of outside factors such as medical care, genetics, public health and social factors. These outside factors are amenable to your influence and should be a priority.

In Cuyahoga County, many organizations – from my own, to the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, to the hospitals and many community organizations – have been working together to better understand and improve the health of the population. This work is making a difference. Over the last decade Cuyahoga County has seen a decline in the number

of premature deaths and preventable hospital stays and an increase in the number of diabetic screenings, for instance. While progress has certainly been made, there is room for improvement. In 2014, Cuyahoga County ranked 65th out of Ohio's 88 counties for health outcomes, according to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the same organization that monitors the trends mentioned above.



Your involvement with and support of initiatives aimed at improving the health of the region's citizens could be transformative. This is especially true for health factors whose trend lines have moved in the wrong direction – or stagnated – over the last decade like adult obesity, infant mortality, physical inactivity and sexually transmitted infections.

### 2. Support continued Medicaid coverage.

Thanks to broadened eligibility of Medicaid, as of this June, 33,492 newly-eligible Cuyahoga County residents have enrolled in Medicaid. This coverage produces a lot of advantages for those who are now eligible for it, many related to access. With improved access to routine care, the newly insured are more likely to effectively manage chronic conditions and receive appropriate preventive care. They are more likely to have a primary care physician and less likely to consider the emergency department the only place they can go for health care. They are also more likely to seek care when they need it rather than waiting until their condition requires emergency care.

*Your involvement with and support of initiatives aimed at improving the health of the region's citizens could be transformative.*

### 3. Back policies that are good for the county's economy.

To be sure, the expanded access to health care that accompanies broadened Medicaid eligibility is critical, but the economic benefits associated with this policy are arguably as important. According to HPIO, in 2015, expanded Medicaid is expected to yield \$2.5 million in additional sales tax revenues and 4,367 new jobs in Cuyahoga County. As the head of Cuyahoga County, protecting these dollars should be at the top of your priority list.

A strong economy not only makes sense from a dollars and cents perspective, it also makes sense from a health perspective. Additional tax revenues mean additional dollars

to address population health issues and some of the social factors that contribute to them. Imagine being able to use some of the additional dollars to ensure school children who receive free lunch have enough to eat even during summer vacation. Imagine being able to provide housing assistance to homeless veterans suffering from behavioral health issues. These types of programs make a difference in the health of the county's population and extra tax revenues from Medicaid expansion make them possible.

Similarly, the additional 4,367 jobs expected to result from the Medicaid policy changes are critical to the county not only from an economic perspective but also because employment status and poverty are strongly correlated to health. According to the RWJ Foundation, laid off workers are 54 percent more likely to have fair or poor health and 83 percent more likely to develop a stress-related condition such as heart disease.

In welcoming you to your new role, I urge you to remember how important health is to leading a full and meaningful life. Cuyahoga County residents are fortunate to live among some of the best hospitals and health systems in the nation, yet the health of our population is not what it should be. The Center for Health Affairs, its member hospitals and a multitude of community organizations plan to continue their efforts to make a difference. Your leadership and support with these efforts is one way to ensure that you are living up to the timeless ideals set forth nearly 100 years ago. We know that the "removal of conditions which are responsible for sickness and injury" is just as important today as it was a century ago and we look forward to working together to make Cuyahoga County a healthier community.



William T. Ryan  
President & CEO  
The Center for Health Affairs



## Dear County Executive:

The last 14 years have been particularly hard on homeowners in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County. Out of control lending which led to the "Great Recession" has done damage to neighborhoods throughout the County. Well over 120,000 foreclosures were filed against county property owners between 2000 and 2013—three times the average during normal lending cycles. Cleveland lost 18% of its population, largely as a result of this crisis. Property values have fallen as a result of these foreclosures with the sale prices of homes in Cleveland and five inner ring suburbs plummeting by 60+ per cent between 2008 and 2013. Cuyahoga County, working in partnership with these afflicted Cuyahoga County cities, can do a lot to correct this situation. This is now a regional problem and requires a regional solution at the county level.

Here are some action steps the County should take immediately.

1) Re-establish the County as a leader in the fight to stem foreclosures. There will be 7,000 foreclosures filed in 2014—twice the average number of filings before this crisis took off in the late 90's. The County's Foreclosure Prevention Office, closed in 2011, should be re-opened to lead efforts

to fund counseling efforts, raise awareness in Columbus and Washington and speak to banks and servicers of these mortgages with the imprimatur of the County Executive. As the elected executive of the largest county in the State, you will get their attention when you speak to this issue. I know people are weary of talking about this problem—but it isn't over.

### *The Cuyahoga County land bank is a national model and it deserves your full support.*

2) Seek creative ways to fund rehabilitation efforts for properties in Cuyahoga County. The need for these dollars is county wide. The Housing Enhancement Loan Program, started in 1999, is a linked deposit home repair program through the County Treasury that has made almost 200 million dollars in home improvement loans since that time. Continue that program, but seek other ways to use the County's financial might to make other low interest dollars available. Look to the emerging trend of bank settlements with the US Department of Justice as potential sources of dollars to fund these efforts as well as existing Community Reinvestment Act laws.

3) The County needs to pass the proposed 50 million dollar demolition bond currently before the County Council. If they don't pass it before you take office it is the first thing you should do upon taking office. Too many neighborhoods of Cleveland and inner ring suburbs have endured abandoned zombie structures much too long. The structures rob conscientious residents of equity and community safety. Additionally, the County needs to make borrowing to address blight a regular part of its borrowing schedule. If we as a county continue to ignore the blight in the inner city—and now the inner ring suburbs—it will continue to spread and impact every homeowner in Cuyahoga County. Over 45 million dollars in tax obligations have shifted from the city and inner ring suburbs to more stable communities in the County. This is because there are four county wide levies that draw on every homeowner in the County for support, but because appraised values are so low in afflicted communities, the shortfall in collections are picked up with higher millage requests. Only by playing an active role to stabilize values throughout Cuyahoga County can this situation be remedied. You must be patient as this will not happen overnight—but over time.

4) The Cuyahoga County land bank is a national model and it deserves your full support. In just a few years the land bank has renovated 1,000 blighted structures and removed 2,700 by demolition. The land bank has become the most important tool for housing market stabilization and recovery in both the urban core and the county's suburbs. You should ensure that the land bank has the financial resources to meet this challenge, and has the full cooperation of county departments as it fulfills its mission.

5) Conduct an assessment of the County's methods of collecting delinquent property taxes. The sale of tax liens to private investors in particular has been widely criticized as causing harm to people of color, senior citizens and other vulnerable residents of the County. The County stopped the sale of tax liens in 2008 because of these concerns, but the current Executive re-introduced the practice in 2011. On the other hand the County frequently permits tax reductions intended for seniors and homeowners to remain

on a property even after the property has been sold to a private absentee owner, leading to lost tax revenue. A full examination of tax collection practices should be initiated.

6) Initiate a planning process to develop a "Cuyahoga County Housing Plan". This will help ensure that the County has a thoughtful framework for addressing housing issues over the next decade and longer. Although such a plan will undoubtedly address many of the action steps raised above, the planning process, which by its nature may take many months, should not hinder your taking immediate action on the above items which demand urgent attention.

Please feel free to contact me for further information.



Jim Rokakis  
Director  
Thriving Communities Institute

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## Dear County Executive:

I consider it a privilege to be able to write as an immigrant and member of the Latino/a community to one of the most important leaders in our region!

I have been a pastor and non-profit leader for the last 26 years in this great community of ours and I sincerely believe that our best days are ahead of us. Part of my excitement for the future is connected with immigrant communities looking at this geographical area as the place where they can work, create new businesses, worship and raise their children & grandchildren.

*I pray that in your strategic plan you include the richness and the wisdom of all the immigrant communities represented in this area.*

My hope is that as you tackle all the challenges and opportunities of this region – and I am sure they are many – that you don't forget to tap into the amazing wealth (including financial) that exists among those sojourners who are by nature entrepreneurs, hard workers and risk takers. To miss this engine for economic development would be a great mistake as together we make this Greater Cleveland everything that it could be!

I pray that in your strategic plan you include the richness and the wisdom of all the immigrant communities represented in this area. Please, fight the obsolete and protective voices of those who see immigrants as threats and commit to create a multi-cultural and inclusive global village like all the other thriving metropolis of this nation/world.

Respectfully,



Rev. Max Rodas  
Guatemalan born/American Citizen

## Dear County Executive:

A few weeks ago I listened to three members of Towards Employment's Graduate Advisory Board speak to our board of directors. Their stories represented a diversity of life experience, education, family circumstances...yet they shared something in common that had overtaken all other aspects of their lives: a criminal conviction. Despite having served their sentences, as they started to rebuild their lives, they faced a torrent of rejection. With credentials that were no longer of any use, or none at all, these three spoke of their sense of hopelessness, loss of faith in themselves, of being in a world of road blocks and dead ends.

They are not alone: over 4,000 people returning from state prisons to Cuyahoga County each year face these challenges, in addition to those with convictions who remain in the community under various forms of supervision. According to studies reviewed by the Urban Institute, having a legitimate job lessens the chances of re-offending following release from prison; and the higher an individual's wage, the less likely it is that someone with a criminal record will return to crime." However, a Pew Charitable Trusts report found that "serving time reduces hourly wages for men by 11%, annual employment by 9 weeks and annual earnings by 40%." And surveys indicate a criminal background is one of the most cited reasons why an employer would not hire.

It makes overwhelming individual, social and economic sense to be sure that those who have done their time have opportunities to gain tools to contribute to the success of their communities, as engaged parents and productive employees. How can we make this happen for more people in a more efficient way in Cuyahoga County?

### *Close the Skills Gap...*

The NEO economy is starting to see signs of life after the Great Recession. Employers are signaling new interest in hiring; demand for skilled workers in critical industries such as manufacturing and health care remains high. Planned construction projects will require skilled tradesmen, and the growth in hotels and restaurants will require trained culinary and hospitality professionals. However, employers are raising concerns about their ability to fill open positions due to lack of qualified applicants. This "skills gap" presents an opportunity for Cuyahoga County to be a leader in crafting robust career pathway programs that link a previously marginalized population to the education, training and hands on experience needed to build a talent pipeline that will meet the needs of Cuyahoga County's employers.



### *Create Career Pathways with multiple on-ramps....*

Job preparation efforts should be demand driven and industry specific, and offer career pathways that accommodate multiple on-ramps for people entering the

labor market at different stages of preparation. Programs will need to cross traditional boundaries to align existing funding streams for greater efficiency and impact.

Additional supports for those with limited skills and experience may include addressing "life stability" issues, building academic and technical skills, using contextualized curriculum and flexible scheduling options, and offering opportunities to gain professional exposure through job shadowing, internships, networking and on-the-job-training.

For individuals with criminal backgrounds, particularly those returning to the community after incarceration, the need for work experience is especially critical. Transitional jobs programs can rapidly place participants into temporary, subsidized jobs (often in nonprofit or government agencies, but increasingly in social enterprises designed to create such employment opportunities), provide intensive support, and then help participants find permanent jobs. When targeted to recently released former prisoners, transitional jobs provide a source of legitimate income during the critical period just after release, and also provide program staff with an opportunity to identify and address workplace problems before participants move to the regular labor market. Transitional jobs can also provide participating employers with an opportunity to test out a worker before hiring them permanently which may be particularly useful for employers who might not otherwise consider a candidate with a criminal background.

Once a permanent job is obtained, ongoing industry-specific career coaching and the availability of support services after job placement are important to help reinforce new behaviors, support adjustment to new expectations, and retain a focus on building a career.

*For individuals with criminal backgrounds, the need for work experience is especially critical.*

For those with a criminal background, the mix of services needed will depend on both the individual's risk factors for recidivism as well as their work readiness. A recent white paper published by the Council on State Government's Reentry Resource Center provides a road map for cross-system coordination between criminal justice and workforce development that integrates best practices from both systems. The County should facilitate this coordination by creating incentives for working across systems and reducing bureaucratic barriers to sharing information.

#### *Align funding to support Career Pathway programming...*

As noted, successful pathway programs require coordination across multiple systems with a variety of funding streams. County leadership is needed to promote the kind of industry-driven sector partnerships that bring together employers, education and training providers, the Workforce Investment Board, and community organizations to offer an aligned set of services that effectively addresses the skill needs of key industries, while creating supported pathways for lower skilled workers. Establishing a shared community vision, common metrics and key indicators of success is essential to achieving the necessary alignment.

#### *And Growing to Scale...*

These strategies are working for the three graduates mentioned above, and for 535 other Cuyahoga County residents, 375 of whom had criminal justice involvement,

served by Towards Employment in 2013. Pilots of the full model are achieving promising results. For example, WorkAdvance, a regional partnership including industry associations, workforce, training and social service organizations led by Towards Employment, is a comprehensive career pathway initiative focusing on manufacturing and health care. Nearly 300 previously un- and under-employed, low-income individuals are now working in jobs with an average wage over \$10.50/hr, after accessing a menu of services including industry-driven hard and softskill training, career coaching and wraparound supports, with more in the pipeline. Over 30% advanced within 18 months of the start of the program, with average increases of over \$2/hr. A recent US Department of Labor grant will expand this work to include construction and culinary pathways specifically targeted to individuals in work-release programs, starting to build skills and address barriers prior to their release from incarceration. It is my hope that under your leadership, these examples of comprehensive career pathway programming, with targeted strategies for individuals with criminal backgrounds in coordination with the justice system can be grown to scale, so more businesses find the talent they need, and previously marginalized job seekers find productive employment. This is win-win for our economy, our community and our County.



Jill Rizika  
Executive Director  
Towards Employment, Inc.

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## Dear County Executive:

This is an exciting time for Cuyahoga County and our region. From the planned lakefront development to the rebirth of many of our neighborhoods, we are experiencing a revitalization that has been years in the making. As the new County Executive, we are counting on you to continue this momentum through smart policy, partnership and funding decisions that will make our county a healthy and vibrant place where all residents can prosper. Critical pieces of that prosperity, we believe, are strong neighborhoods of choice that draw people into a community and access to economic opportunity for the people that live there. We recommend the following to help you strengthen the county in both ways.

### **Neighborhoods of Choice – Create a Comprehensive Neighborhood Stabilization Policy for Cuyahoga County**

A foundational part of neighborhoods of choice is a healthy and affordable housing and commercial property stock. Yet across the county we are still plagued with thousands of vacant and abandoned properties and plummeting property values, including:

- In Cleveland, there are an estimated 8,300 vacant and abandoned properties, many of which are prime candidates for demolition.
- In East Cleveland there are more than 1,000 vacant and abandoned properties and hundreds more county-wide, along with a growing older housing stock in need of care in many of the inner-ring suburbs.

- Ongoing foreclosures and abandonment has led to falling property values in Cleveland and five inner-ring suburbs, which has shifted nearly \$45 million in real property taxes to Cuyahoga County's other 53 communities (Thriving Communities Institute, 2013).
- Vacant and abandoned properties in our neighborhoods also attract crime and add additional cost burdens on local governments who have little to no resources to effectively address these issues.

To tackle this challenge and seize it as an opportunity, the County must have a comprehensive neighborhood stabilization policy to provide a strategic framework and resources for cities to address their unique needs for targeted demolition, housing renovation, and urban greening to effectively reuse vacant land. The County should work with key partners to ensure this policy framework leads the way to spur micro and macro-economic development and ultimately helps to stabilize (and eventually increase) property values.

### **Access to Economic Opportunity – Invest in Local Job Creation and Financial Empowerment Strategies**

Despite some gains, high rates of unemployment and access to jobs with a career pathway continue to be a challenge for our community. Consider the following:

- 21% of working age adults in Cuyahoga County are currently not in the labor force, and 17% of Cuyahoga County residents who work year-round and full-time at minimum wage still earn less than the poverty level, which is \$16,536 for an individual (Center for Community Solutions, 2014)
- 34% of Cuyahoga County residents are living in asset poverty, meaning they do not have the savings or assets to cover basic expenses (food, housing, etc.) for three months should a loss of income occur (CFED, 2012). Moreover, studies show that families on public assistance usually leave the system without savings to sustain them in future financial emergencies.
- Small business lending activity is still below prerecession levels with many entrepreneurs unable to access traditional streams of capital due to low credit scores and other disqualifying factors, (Federal Reserve, 2014).

To address this, the County should focus investments in three key areas:

1. Support neighborhood economic development to strengthen and grow retail and commercial districts, which creates neighborhood job opportunities.

*To move the needle in these areas it will require the collective vision, partnership and action of key stakeholders across the county, as none of us possess the ability to solve these challenges on our own.*

2. Infuse robust and comprehensive asset building strategies into the job training and social service delivery continuum to better support low-income individuals as they transition from public assistance into employment. This fits with the County's work to streamline and innovate its health and human services system.

3. Invest in alternative loan platforms and credit building initiatives to help promising entrepreneurs build the

credibility they need to access traditional streams of capital to launch new businesses.

To move the needle in these areas it will require the collective vision, partnership and action of key stakeholders across the county, as none of us possess the ability to solve these challenges on our own. We are fortunate that this county is home to a diverse community of funders, businesses, nonprofit partners and many others who have countless years of experience and leadership in neighborhood stabilization and advancing access to economic opportunity for individuals.

As County Executive, you have the power to set a common vision for the county in these areas, and to convene and leverage these key stakeholders to move this work forward. Cleveland Neighborhood Progress is a willing partner and welcomes the opportunity to work with you. Now let's get started!



Joel Ratner  
President & CEO  
Cleveland Neighborhood Progress

## **Dear County Executive:**

Cuyahoga County is in the midst of a literacy crisis. From young children to adults we are facing troubling statistics and daunting challenges. The foundations for literacy skills are constructed early in life yet many children in our community begin kindergarten each year ill-prepared to succeed. In fact, based on the KRA-L (kindergarten readiness assessment for literacy), 80% of children in Cleveland, 79% of children in East Cleveland, and 70% of children in Warrensville walk into a kindergarten classroom on the first day of school not prepared. From the very beginning they have to play catch up to their peers. Statistics have



shown that those who score low on the KRA-L are also more likely to not be proficient in reading by third grade. This is especially worrying with the new Third Grade Reading Guarantee. In the first year of the guarantee, 334 CMSD students were held back in the third grade, a 600% increase over the previous year. Based on 2014 Ohio Achievement Assessment scores, only, 68.5% of East Cleveland students

and 61.1% of Warrensville Hts. students passed the third grade reading test. As students fall further and further behind, the likelihood of them graduating on time gets smaller and smaller. In a time when the high school diploma itself is rapidly decreasing in value this is worrying.

As you can see early literacy is in a major crisis but children are not the only ones who are affected by the literacy emergency. There are a number of adults who are beyond the help of early education reform. One hundred and thirteen thousand (113,000) Cuyahoga County adults do not have a high school diploma while an additional 270,000 adults have a high school diploma but no post-secondary degree. This puts them at a distinct disadvantage in a job market where 60% of jobs will require a college education by 2018. This leads to a large number of un-employed or under-employed citizens which often results in families living in poverty. Lack of basic reading and math skills present a barrier to the education or skills training needed to obtain family sustaining jobs. While Cuyahoga County's poverty rate is slightly below the national average of 15%, we have cities within Cuyahoga County that are well above the average. The poverty rate in East Cleveland is a staggering 39.7%: Cleveland is close behind at 34.1%. Of course, low literacy and poverty has a generational impact. Eighty-five percent (85%) of children whose parents had less than a high school education and 60% of children whose parents had a high school diploma but no college lived in poverty compared to 25% of children whose parents had some college. Combining these statistics with the literacy statistics stated earlier shows a cycle of poverty that is extremely difficult to break. A cycle that is difficult, but not impossible, to break if low-skilled adults are given support and access to opportunities to improve their basic skills; such as through Career Pathways programs.

*Early literacy is in a major crisis but children are not the only ones who are affected by the literacy emergency.*

Low literacy affects our entire county. Annually, more than \$706 million of the county expenses can be attributed to low literacy. Healthcare costs the county \$514 million because individuals with low literacy have health care costs four times higher than those with proficient literacy skills. Public assistance costs the county \$134 million and is 45% higher for those with no high school diploma as opposed to those with a secondary education. The cost for corrections is \$38 million due to recidivism among the nearly 6,000 individuals who return from prison to Cuyahoga County each year. Children of parents with low literacy skills who do not receive intensive academic intervention in pre-kindergarten are 60% more likely to require special education and remedial education costing the county \$20 million in education. Even just one year of post-secondary education can have an increase of 4-7% in per capita output. Further, as adults improve their earning potential they are able to contribute more to the economy through spending and taxes.

Because the literacy crisis is extensive and has an effect on all areas of life in our community, we propose a comprehensive literacy crisis plan that incorporates every aspect of the county from corrections and health care to education. This plan, developed under your leadership, has to focus not only on helping prepare students for school, improving

reading scores and graduation rates but it also has to provide solutions for helping low-skilled adults raise their basic skills so that they can further their education and be able to compete in the new job market. It is essential that not only is this plan developed but that it also reaches every area of the community affected by the crisis.

We believe your plan must bring together all your department heads and county appointees to area boards to solicit their input and support to address this issue. They must not only completely understand the plan but they must know how to include it in their specific initiatives as well. This crisis affects every department. For a plan of this nature to succeed it is essential that you ensure that everyone plays their part.

Literacy plays a part in every aspect of our lives. It is crucial that we focus on this crisis and that we all work together to raise literacy rates to improve quality of life in Cuyahoga County.



Robert Paponetti  
Executive Director  
The Literacy Cooperative

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## Dear County Executive:

There are many positive events occurring in the Greater Cleveland community. Recognition and celebration of such developments are certainly in order. Many in our community are seeing and believing that our city and county are experiencing an exciting "turn around" period, promising a better future and quality of life. However, in order to continue our quest for an increasingly promising future, we must, as a local community and state, invest more in a critical area which heavily impacts outcomes in health and healthcare, education, and economic development and growth ... and that is, **investing adequately in the very early years of a child's life.**

Extensive research has been done and validated over the past two decades and more, which tells us what is required to maximize every child's potential and future productivity, as well as what factors can compromise that child's potential. In the first 3 to 5 years of life, the brain is developing at excessive speed, creating critical connections that enable the child to learn and develop. Early experiences, environments, relationships and interactions with significant people/caregivers greatly impact the ultimate structure of the brain. This early developmental period is the time that offers the most opportunities, as well as vulnerabilities, for development that will impact an entire lifetime, positively or negatively. Striking reproductions of brain scans showing dramatic differences between brains of children exposed to negative or positive environments during the first years of life indicate that there are actual physical changes in the brain depending on the young child's experiences. Also, many special needs show up in the first 3 years of life of a child, and it is just as critical that they have opportunities for early intervention/early education, in order to minimize the impact of their disability and maximize their potential to be productive citizens. The 2010 Ohio Business Roundtable



report stated “we must invest where research tells us we can have the **biggest impact- the earliest years.**”

Our County has made some great progress in this area through multiple avenues and programs, such as Help Me Grow, Invest in Children, Starting Point, and more. However, according to the Ohio’s Talent Challenge Report in 2010, 98% of Ohio’s public expenditures occur after the age of 5-after 90% of brain development has already occurred. In a 2013 report from Policy Matters Ohio, Ohio’s General Revenue funding for early education, child care, and social support for children declined in 2013. This 2013 report stated, “Resources should be directed toward restoration, with a long term funding plan of moving Ohio up from the bottom of rankings in key areas like infant mortality, kindergarten readiness, children’s services and eligibility for childcare.” The very recent passage of HB 483, which adds new funding to strengthen Ohio’s child care program is a step in the right direction.

James Heckman, Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago, Nobel Laureate, and author of *Return on Investment: Cost vs. Benefits*, argues that the health of our talent and our economy is only as healthy as our investment in the development of children from birth to age five. He found that early nurturing, learning experiences, physical health and early interventions for ages zero to five, greatly impact success or failure in society. Heckman’s research further demonstrated that every dollar invested in early childhood education produces a 10% per annum return on investment which far exceeds returns of later investments in a variety of programs.

These early years build the foundation for the child’s later cognitive achievements, learning of social skills, social-emotional health and the ability to build relationships with others. The importance of this foundation is magnified for children with special needs and children in poverty. The Ohio Business Roundtable report in 2010 noted that when reflecting on what research tells us, The New York Times columnist David Brooks wrote, “**By age 5, it is possible to predict with depressing accuracy who will complete high school and college and who won’t.**” This should be an alarm and an immediate call to action for all of us! Yes, locally we have made some gains since 2010, but there is still so much more to do and accomplish. In order to assure healthy economic growth, it requires more capable, productive, and healthy citizens. Multiple and validating research is available which tells us what needs to be done. Now we must award it the adequate priority level, via policies and targeted resources at our national, state and local levels. Beginning at age 5 is too late!



Increasing our community’s knowledge of these facts, while advocating for our youngest population hence, our resultant future, needs to be a critical part of our County Executive’s agenda. Our County Executive position has a wide reach and the ability to inform and exchange information with so many, including the business community, our local, state and federal government entities and representatives, foundations, nonprofits, the media, and many colleagues. Please use your position in this manner.

*The health of our talent and our economy is only as healthy as our investment in the development of children from birth to age five.*

If our local community (as well as our nation) expects future financial stability and growth, we must invest more in early child care, early education, and early childhood mental health, early intervention for special needs, parent/caregiver education and counseling. Assurance of quality programs including measurable and meaningful outcomes must occur through the ability to attract and develop knowledgeable, qualified and deeply skilled individuals. We must be able to compete for the brightest and the best through compensation and work environments that reflect the importance of this work to our communities’ ultimate success.

The National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families- Zero to Three states, “Too many infants and toddlers are born into, and grow up in, environments that narrow opportunities for realizing their potential. This comes at a great cost to all of us. Our nation’s prosperity is jeopardized when the future of so many children is compromised.” We cannot accept this and we can change it. We look to and need leaders who understand the challenges, but more importantly, see the opportunities that can be expanded and created, if the will is there. We ask you, our County Executive, to be one of those leaders.

Many years ago, a Chilean visionary, Gabrielle Mistral, stated, “Many things we need can wait-the child cannot. Now is the time his/her bones are being formed, his blood is being made, his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow, his/her name is today.” Our future depends heavily on acting on this knowledge.



Patricia W. Nobili, MSSA  
President & CEO  
Achievement Centers for Children

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**Dear County Executive:**

The nonprofit sector in Cuyahoga County and Greater Cleveland is vibrant. The many private organizations that work with government are an essential part of the service delivery of public sector programming and the economic advancement of the region. These organizations concentrate expertise and human resource talent in a way that supplements and complements the objectives of legislators, public officials and public managers.

They also create public value through the fulfillment of their missions, by educating government on the best practices for the delivery of its services and for advances in public policy, and by entering into meaningful partnerships with other nonprofits, government agencies and businesses.

But nonprofit organizations are fragile. One or two deficient budget cycles can harm an organization's capacity to perform the work of civil society.

Government can do much more to facilitate the work of these organizations by paying attention to the concept of true, meaningful partnership.

The view from the field suggests that nonprofit leaders use a set of particular value-judgments to weigh the ways a partnership will benefit their organization beyond transactional funding for services commonly provided by public managers.

In other words, the manner in which the people leading the partnership conceive of the meaningfulness to their organization weighs strongly in any assessment of whether or not those relationships can be or have been successful. And, the perspective of the primary partner in the relationship contributes in important ways to the manner in which the relationship unfolds. So, parsing the subtle differences in the meaning of "partnership" that public, private and nonprofit leaders and managers assign to their funding and RFPs is an important detail for partner organizations committing to creating, durable, high-performing and "meaningful partnerships."

From the perspective of nonprofit leaders, "meaningful partnerships" are particular kinds of arrangements with distinctive qualities and characteristics. Not all public policy and private grantmaker imposed "partnerships" are "meaningful" nor likely to be partnerships at all, despite the nomenclature assigned by public managers and others to these ventures.

In my public service and applied research work with nonprofit agencies, experienced nonprofit executives frequently tell me that public policies and practices requiring their organizations to enter into partnership arrangements in public sector contracted work complicated and added unfunded costs to their operations in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

***Government can do much more to facilitate the work of these organizations by paying attention to the concept of true, meaningful partnership.***

Executives mentioned that for many human service and other nonprofits participating in public sector and grantmaker imposed partnerships, forming shallow "transactional" and nonpermanent arrangements with other nonprofit organizations was common among their peers. These executives particularly did not consider public sector contractually obligated partnerships between nonprofit service providers to be partnerships because they were seldom "meaningful," which they characterized as transforming or strengthening their organizations in anticipated and unanticipated ways.

Nonprofit leaders can and do consider a "meaningful partnership" to be a preferred outcome for their organizations' limited time and treasure. They frequently

will enter into partnership without prompting if they identify a problem and can envision a solution through partnership. They become more attractive when third parties, such as government and philanthropy, then provide the resources to enable a partnership to occur.

The view from the field expressed by nonprofit executives is that the burdens of required or contrived partnerships detract organizations from forming "meaningful partnerships." Some of the challenge may be found in the ways public and private players describe and set expectations for nonprofit participants. Understanding the difference across sectors in the use of the terms "partnership" and "collaboration" is important both for policy-makers seeking to kindle cooperative arrangements and for nonprofit leaders engaged in making them work.

Insight from nonprofit executives familiar with the promise and pitfalls of collaboration can inform policy makers determined to inspire sustained connections between organizations. The benefits and costs associated with nonprofit organizations involved in public sector driven collaboration and partnership are important policy considerations.

Practical experience shared by nonprofit executives inform us that meaningful partnerships have a return on investment for each member who share measures of responsibility, knowledge and capacity, power, authority and measureable outcomes. Experience also makes clear that collaboration and partnerships are particular kinds of arrangements with distinctive qualities and characteristics; that quality programs and outcomes derived through collaboration are based on strong personal relationships; and that not all collaborations are partnerships.

As County Executive, your involvement and influence can help ensure truly meaningful partnerships that can benefit nonprofit organizations and the thousands of people they serve in Cuyahoga County.



Stuart C. Mendel, Ph.D.  
*Assistant Dean and Director, The Urban Center;  
The Center for Nonprofit Policy & Practice  
Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs,  
Cleveland State University*

PS: A more thorough treatment of this subject can be found in "Achieving meaningful partnerships with nonprofit organizations and why public managers should care: A view from the field," *Journal of Nonprofit Education & Leadership*, Volume 3, Issue 2 (2013)



## **Dear County Executive:**

Cuyahoga County is in the midst of a major success that too few know about. We are ending chronic adult homelessness thanks in large part to Housing First.

Housing First is an initiative that was established in April, 2002 to provide permanent housing solutions for persons who experience long-term homelessness. The Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland convened Enterprise Community Partners and the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services to formulate a plan to end long-term homelessness through the provision of permanent supportive housing.

The outcomes have been staggering. Chronic homelessness has reduced dramatically with very little to no recidivism.

Today, there are more than 600 apartments across Cleveland, with more in the pipeline, occupied by residents who were previously homeless. The goal is nearly 1,300 apartments. Through the hard work of this successful public-private partnership, Cuyahoga County is a national leader in reducing homelessness among those with the highest barriers to finding and maintaining housing. We have seen a 72% decrease in the numbers of those chronically homeless individuals since the first project opened in 2006. We are known by the national housing and homelessness leaders as one of the most effective communities to reduce chronic homelessness and are frequently held up as a national model.

The goal of Housing First is simple – move homeless people into housing first and offer on-site services such as drug or alcohol treatment, mental health services and job training programs. These services and treatment programs are available and encouraged, but not mandatory.

The effectiveness of Housing First is amazing. Over 78% of the residents remain in their apartments and almost all are engaged in services. Half the residents are volunteers, participating in educational activities or employed. The rate of emergency room visits and hospitalizations have been substantially reduced. Statistics show approximately 20% of the residents move on to more independent housing situations and/or reunite with family.

***The most effective solution to ending homelessness is affordable housing.***

Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services has been a major partner in this work along with many other local agencies and collaborators. We applaud their efforts to target limited federal resources towards Housing First projects that serve the chronically homeless and other best practices that have been proven to prevent and end homelessness. We hope that this momentum and the county's commitment continue to help us reach our goal.

While the success is great, there are other populations experiencing homelessness and we must continue to implement evidence based solutions to prevent and end their homeless experience. One such population is homeless youth aged 15 to 24. Many of these are youth currently in, or have aged out of, the county foster system.

As we did with combating chronic adult homelessness, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland is pulling together organizations and agencies to tackle this problem under the umbrella of A Place 4 Me, a name decided by the youth. The partnership with the County's Department of Child and Family Services and Office of Homeless Services is critical to this work.

As we develop practices and policies to support young people from entering homelessness, we hope that Cuyahoga County will continue to partner deeply with the community in embracing solutions to address this pressing problem.

For most, homelessness is a short-term crisis resulting from an unforeseen financial emergency such as the loss of a job, serious illness, or death in the family. Typically, the affected individual can rebound from the crisis on their own or with limited assistance.

However, we do know that the most effective solution to ending homelessness is affordable housing. Like most areas in the country, Cuyahoga County has a significant affordable housing gap. Waiting lists for those qualified for public housing are on average four to five years long. Many families live either in over-crowded housing or spend nearly half of their income to maintain housing, leaving very little resources for other necessities such as transportation, food, utilities, child care, and clothing.

For this reason, Cuyahoga County established a county Housing Trust Fund a few years ago. While the statutes establishing the trust fund have all been approved, we have not yet seen a dedicated funding source to actually implement the fund. The Housing Trust Fund could be an important tool in creating more affordable housing in the county. We encourage you to learn more about the possibilities that the Housing Trust Fund can offer to vulnerable citizens in Cuyahoga County and for the county to prioritize an investment in this important resource for its citizens.

Since 1998, the Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland has invested almost \$14 million to strengthen our community's capacity to create homes for people in need, because for each and every one of us, home is where our story begins.



Susanna H. Krey  
President  
Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland

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***Dear County Executive:***

We urge you to focus on education, jobs and health until every Cuyahoga County resident has access to the resources needed to live a healthy life, all kids graduate from high school and every individual and family is financially stable. Impact education, income and health and, together, we will change the landscape of poverty in our community, once and for all.

United Way of Greater Cleveland mobilizes our community and your constituents – corporations, individuals and government officials – to give, advocate and volunteer to advance education, income and health. These three priorities are the building blocks for a good quality of life. They are not three isolated community aspirations, but interrelated, permanent solutions to our community's most pressing needs.

Your advocacy for education, jobs and health will help keep these issues at the top of the political agenda, fueling a robust movement for change.

**Education**

Today in Cuyahoga County, 18 percent (1 out of 6) of adults 25 and over do not have a high school diploma, despite the fact high school graduation is a key component to attaining a job.

A child's academic journey is long. They can be steered from graduation as early as preschool. The warning signs are high absenteeism, behavior problems in the classroom and competencies below that of other children. Too many of our kids begin kindergarten without the ability to recognize

letters, count to 20 or even write their name. A poor start leads to a bad finish, and the consequences are dire.

We urge you to join us in taking responsibility to ensure our kids are prepared to enter school ready to learn and have a strong start from day one.

It begins with quality preschools. Cuyahoga County can graduate more kids by investing in professional development to boost all of our community's preschools to five-star rankings in accordance with Ohio's Step Up to Quality rating and improvement system. Join United Way and let's invest in high-quality preschools throughout the county.



The work doesn't stop there. From kindergarten to third grade, our children are learning to read; by fourth grade, they should be reading to learn. But to concentrate on learning, kids need to be healthy, nourished and feel secure. To address these barriers to learning, United Way has implemented wraparound initiatives in 25 Cleveland Metropolitan School District schools. This action places a coordinator in each school responsible for identifying and addressing our kids' social and emotional needs so students can concentrate on learning and teachers can concentrate on teaching. The coordinator works with community members, parents, teachers and school administrators to get kids the help needed to be successful. From elementary to high school, this strategy works.

United Way implements wraparound initiatives in 25 schools. But that leaves more than 100 schools in Cleveland and the suburbs without these types of services proven to deliver quality education throughout our community.

Please join us in finding resources to wrap every school in our county with the support needed to get our kids across the graduation stage.

*Your advocacy for education, jobs and health will help keep these issues at the top of the political agenda, fueling a robust movement for change.*

### **Income**

In 2013, United Way 2-1-1 answered more than 222,000 calls in Cuyahoga County and the top request was for food and housing. United Way 2-1-1 provides a real-time view of where our community members are struggling. Let's work together to solve problems when they arise for specific segments of our community.

Cuyahoga County and United Way 2-1-1 have demonstrated several successful partnerships through a number of initiatives, including the Help 2 Veterans line, the Fatherhood Initiative and Defending Childhood, to name a few. Please continue to utilize United Way and United Way 2-1-1 as a resource and partner to ensure our community has the services and support its residents need most.

Join us in our quest to identify and address specific issues where we can intervene and prevent long-term financial consequences. Foreclosure hurts the entire family for generations to come. We know a child's academic performance declines each time a family incurs an unplanned move. Our Family Stability Initiative is a program designed to assist families with school-aged children who own their homes and are at risk of foreclosure. The initiative aims to keep children stable in school.

And we need to ensure youth in Cuyahoga County succeed in life after high school. We propose county support for programs assisting youth with alternative paths to post-secondary education and the careers of their choice and workforce development. It's critical for our community to clear barriers to employment and support individuals in growing their careers to increase the number of our neighbors actively engaged in household-sustaining employment.

### **Health**

The life expectancy in the Hough neighborhood is 24 years less than in Lyndhurst. Hough residents live in a "food desert" – defined by the federal government as a low-income community where majority of residents live more than one mile from a full-service grocery store. National data also suggest Lyndhurst residents are far more likely than their Hough counterparts to have regular health care.

Government working with corporate and the nonprofit communities can change this statistic if we work together with the common goal to create a healthy community.

Your commitment to high school graduation in our community will inevitably impact income and health in Cuyahoga County. Education is essential to gaining and maintaining a good job for supporting a family and has health benefits. Income builds a family's solid foundation while creating financial empowerment. Good health helps our kids stay on track at school and adults remain productive at work. Remove any of these building blocks and the other two topple. Build them all up and you've created a foundation of opportunity for Cuyahoga County.



Bill Kitson  
President & CEO  
United Way of Greater Cleveland



### **Dear County Executive:**

Over two decades ago I sat with a small group of volunteers to try to come up with a slogan for our second Walk for Hunger. There were a lot of ideas but we agreed on "No Child Should Go Hungry". Everyone knew that babies and children can suffer severely from ongoing hunger. They

were at risk because their parents lost their jobs in the recession. The Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland expanded the number of major food pantries in the city and added suburban pantries to meet the need, and we began to work on our first special event to meet the ever growing and expanding need for emergency food. Little did we know that hunger would become the long term problem it is now. Our small effort to "Walk for Hunger" was the beginning of our continuing journey to expand resources and to meet this need.

With the aid of over 1,100 dedicated volunteers, our network of over 100 hunger centers and hot meal programs distributes nutritious food directly into the hands of approximately 60,000 hungry people every month, nearly half of whom are children. We respond to 75% of all emergency food needs in the county and 94% of our funds support our program operations. Our major food pantries (hunger centers) are organized geographically and our minimum standards and guidelines guarantee that families we serve receive a three day supply of nutritionally balanced meals once a month. For every dollar raised, we provide four nutritionally balanced meals.

The challenge we face in Cuyahoga County is alleviate hunger is still daunting. Over 150,000 families are on food stamps (SNAP) and hunger is increasing in the suburbs. Families struggle with SNAP cuts and high food prices. County resources are flat. Federal food and funds are dropping. Donations from the public are harder to secure and the volunteer system that serves the hungry has less support than before.

In Cuyahoga County, we are fortunate to have a highly organized response to hunger that at the grassroots level is supported by volunteers and housed in donated space. Administrative costs are low and output is extremely high. Our challenge is not to cut costs but to find ways to sustain this remarkable highly responsive system.

It would not be possible to carry out the Hunger Network's mission without Cuyahoga County. We began work with county leaders in the 1970's to receive a major grant for food and center support and then to organize the food centers into the major safety for the hungry at the neighborhood level we have today. Currently the county supports our emergency food centers at \$1,085,000. The Hunger Network leverages these funds to distribute food valued at \$10 million annually. The county's support affords a stable and reliable community response to hunger. The county's involvement lifts the expectation from a random volunteer effort to a high impact, organized service in our community.

As the hunger problem has grown, the emphasis has rightly been on securing enough food, but a consequence has been that all other aspects of supporting the neighborhood level providers has gone by the wayside. The community partnerships with these programs are critical as they are the "last dirt mile" in the process and offer low cost provision of emergency food in a highly impactful safety net for the community. They are also the vehicle through which key projects like Stay Well, a highly successful model for health education to unreachable populations, can occur.

Our churches and community center partners' support is dwindling and they cannot fill in gaps in the system that we had all taken for granted such as food pick-ups or family assistance. These providers changed to expand freezer space as needed and today less frozen food is available. There is a growing amount of produce but adequate refrigeration is

lacking to accommodate these quickly escalating supplies. As a community we need to look more closely at how to strengthen this infrastructure that carries out the service.

### *The challenge we face in Cuyahoga County to alleviate hunger is still daunting.*

Today, the majority of families experiencing hunger live on incomes that average around \$1,000 per month. Some work part-time or full-time jobs. Others live on fixed incomes like disability or social security. Most of our households are on the SNAP program. Typically they struggle with utility bills, lack reliable transportation and many lack a high school diploma or a GED. Most do not have access to technology. Families frequently ask for personal hygiene and cleaning supplies.

In addition to providing 5,600,000 meals annually, the Hunger Network is working in partnership with University Hospitals Department of Family Medicine on our Stay Well Project. Together we provide health education and health screenings at eleven of our sites. Seven thousand people have participated. Nearly half have been tested for BMI and blood pressure and nearly a third for blood sugar. Fifteen people had life threatening conditions and were sent for emergency care. The Stay Well Project promotes healthy eating choices and encourages the use of more fresh food by clients and our programs. This partnership has made it possible for us to show that having an adequate diet is directly connected with health and quality of life.

Food is a basic necessity and most important is insuring that "No Child (or adult) Goes Hungry". Cuyahoga County is the critical leverage point for this vital work to continue. With your leadership we can address the growing emergency food needs of children and families. We can find new ways to support the grassroots providers, and we can utilize the Hunger Network outreach and education model of the Stay Well Project to add tools to help the hungry improve their quality of life.

We look forward to working with you in the near future to continue to do important work for the hungry in our community.



Dana Irribarren  
Executive Director, CEO  
Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland

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### **Dear County Executive:**

Several recent federal and state policy changes directly impact the lives of County residents who live with disabilities. The laws and policy initiatives listed below reflect a long-standing federal philosophy, and a more current state cultural shift in our thinking, away from sheltering and towards empowering persons with disabilities, away from caring for people in need of long-term services and supports primarily in institutional settings, and toward full integration in their home communities.

Just as all politics is local, what's really important is what happens here in Cuyahoga County. How we, as a community, respond, is critical to the quality of care and quality of life for our family members, neighbors, friends and co-workers with disabilities.

#### • **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

25 years after the passage of the ADA, it is still very difficult for individuals with disabilities to find full-time employment that corresponds to their skills, interests, and goals.

On July 22, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 which requires states to implement changes to improve employment opportunities and outcomes for persons with disabilities. In his comments, the President stated that WIOA "will help workers, including workers with disabilities, access employment, education, job-driven training, and support services that give them the chance to advance their careers and secure the good jobs of the future." WIOA will require Ohio to place greater priority on young people with disabilities, ensuring that they are provided more opportunities to practice and improve work skills, more opportunities to consider what interests them in a career, and more ways to get real world work experience. WIOA will also require Ohio's vocational rehabilitation agency, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, to provide pre-employment transition services to all students with disabilities, and better align disability programs to ensure services, technology, and support is provided for youth with disabilities to lead inclusive and successful lives after school.

Additionally, Ohio will be required to:

- Develop a comprehensive statewide strategy.
- Ensure greater physical and programmatic accessibility at one-stop centers and training providers.
- Improve the integration of basic adult education, occupational skills training, and use of career pathways.
- Prioritize competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, particularly young people transitioning from education to employment.
- Support professional development for employment services staff.

I urge you to bring all parties to the table around the shared goal of Jobs for All and to ensure that those organizations pivotal to achieving your objectives have adequate funding to do the job.

#### • **Federal (Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services) Home and Community-Based Rule Changes and Ohio's Employment First Initiative**

The "Money Follows the Person" Rebalancing Demonstration Program (MFP) helps states rebalance their long-term care systems so that individuals with Medicaid can transition from institutions to the community. MFP program goals include:

- Increase the use of home- and community-based services (HCBS) and reduce the use of institutionally based services
- Eliminate barriers in state law, state Medicaid plans, and state budgets that restrict the use of Medicaid funds to let people get long-term care in the settings of their choice
- Strengthen the ability of Medicaid programs to provide HCBS to people who choose to transition out of institutions

Provisions in the 2014 rule change establish a more outcome-oriented definition of home- and community-based settings. The changes will effectuate the law's intention for Medicaid HCBS to provide alternatives to services provided in institutions and maximize the opportunities for waiver participants to have access to the benefits of community living, including receiving services in, and having the opportunity to work in, the most integrated setting.

#### • **Balancing Incentive Payments Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) System Initiative/Aging and Disability Resource Network**

The Balancing Incentive Program (BIP) was created by the Affordable Care Act of 2010 for the purpose of increasing access to non-institutional long-term services and supports (LTSS). In seeking to help states offer new ways of serving more people in home- and community-based settings, BIP is consistent with the integration mandate of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as required by the Olmstead decision.

#### **My questions are:**

1. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and Ohio's Employment First Initiative talk about providing young persons with disabilities the services and supports they need to be successful in community integrated employment. How will you convene government agencies, social service providers and the private sector to successfully collaborate around shared vision, common goals, and aligned strategies, while ensuring that youth with disabilities have a strong voice at the table?

*Having a common access point to federal, state, and local workforce education and training for job seekers with disabilities gives you the opportunity to advance the rights of our citizens with disabilities.*

2. What actions will you take to ensure that persons with disabilities who call Cuyahoga County home will have both the opportunity to pursue real jobs for real wages and to receive the services and supports they need to live wherever they choose to reside?

To the extent that the County is currently engaged in any of the activities below, I recommend continuation and enhancement. To the extent they are not incorporated in our current systems, I encourage you to include them in your expectations of local outcomes:

- Eliminate silos and remove barriers to accessing training and supportive services that will help people with disabilities contribute to our economy through employment
- Promote a seamless progression from one program to another by aligning services and blending and braiding, at the county systems level, the leveraged resources necessary to achieve success
- Enhance work-based learning opportunities that include functional and contextual learning and provide services that mitigate barriers to success

You, as County Executive, have a pivotal role in supporting local and regional economic growth which includes capitalizing on the largest growing untapped minority labor market, whose civil right to equal opportunity may finally

be realized. As a leader in our community you have access to employers, educational institutions, economic development systems, County boards, nonprofits, and other community-serving organizations. Having a common access point to federal, state, and local workforce education and training for job seekers with disabilities gives you the opportunity to advance the rights of our citizens with disabilities and, at the same time, strengthen the rich and proud diversity our community so strongly supports and enjoys.

I look forward to your leadership and commitment to equality.



Melanie Hogan  
*Executive Director  
Linking Employment,  
Abilities and Potential (LEAP)*



## **Dear County Executive:**

I am honored to introduce you to the Cleveland Chapter of the Young Nonprofit Professional Network. Our mission is to shape Cleveland by cultivating and advocating for a community of connected, engaged, and passionate emerging nonprofit leaders. Our network is composed of diverse young professionals working throughout Cleveland's nonprofit sector. What connects us is our commitment to creating social good.

YNPN Cleveland shares a common goal with civic leaders to see a robust, resilient and thriving region. We believe a cornerstone of this effort is the nonprofit sector. From educational institutions, churches and museums to health and human service agencies, arts organizations and foundations – nonprofits touch almost every aspect of a person's life. They are the backbone of thriving communities.

One of our core values at YNPN Cleveland is collaboration. While there are many challenges in our community, there are an equal number of assets ready to be leveraged. We believe the only way to effectively create change is through strategic, and coordinated collaboration. Therefore, our first ask of you as our County Executive is to develop relationships with the nonprofit leaders in our region. They are uniquely positioned to understand the impact of policy decisions, and all of us will be more successful in our work if we collaborate.

***Our hope is that in important discussions regarding our community you will include young nonprofit professionals.***

Nonprofits play an important role in our community, and vital to these organizations are their emerging employees. Therefore our second ask of you is your support in our efforts to provide opportunities for young nonprofit professionals to grow, develop and take on leadership roles. Young nonprofit professionals are the future of the sector. Investment in them is an investment in our community more broadly.

Since our founding in 2009, YNPN Cleveland has offered programming and leadership opportunities for young

nonprofit professionals. In this work we partner with a variety of organizations in Cuyahoga County, include nonprofits, other young professional organizations and academic institutions. We welcome civic leaders like you to join in our work.

Our final hope is that in important discussions regarding our community you will include young nonprofit professionals. Not only do we bring the unique perspective of young people living and working in our region, but also fresh and vibrant solutions and strategies to enrich our community.

As County Executive, you will face many challenges. At YNPN Cleveland, we believe nonprofits and young nonprofit professionals will play a vital role as your partner in addressing these challenges. Our vision is to develop a community of empowered nonprofit professionals advancing Cleveland. We would be honored to work as your partner in this goal.



Ashley Hartman, MPH, CHES  
*President  
Cleveland Chapter of the Young  
Nonprofit Professionals Network*



## **Dear County Executive:**

Congratulations on your election and on enduring an arduous campaign season!

As our new County Executive you have been afforded a unique opportunity and moment to shape the life of this region and help ensure that Cuyahoga County is an excellent community in which to live, work, raise a family and start a business. At Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry (LMM), we are excited by the economic and social renewal taking place in our region and we work every day with many partners to ensure that development, job creation and an improving economy might reach to all citizens of our county, especially those in greatest need.

And so we ask ourselves this strategic question, perhaps shared with your administration: "What does this region need us to do?" Among many priorities, perhaps the most crucial are affordable housing, re-entry services and workforce development so that individuals can become productive, engaged citizens, contributing to the renewal of our region. While we are excited about possibilities, we are struck by the reality of barriers faced by individuals in this region.

Many individuals begin incarceration with employment challenges and financial instability. A lack of education, housing concerns and mental illness are among the barriers faced by those in our society most in need. Upon their release, their prospects for securing a living wage are grim. According to the Cuyahoga County Office of Reentry, Cuyahoga County welcomes home approximately 4,500 returning citizens every year. Saddled with a record and multiple other barriers, these individuals struggle to find housing and employment. Coupled with an unemployment rate tracking above the national average, the barriers our community members face are many.

LMM sees evidence of these barriers among our program participants – who are almost exclusively residents of

Cuyahoga County. Of more than 3,300 individuals served by LMM last year who needed employment support, 67% were previously incarcerated, 71% were homeless, many struggled with substance abuse and addiction, and virtually all were living in poverty. An average of 700 individuals sought emergency shelter in Cuyahoga County each night according to the most recent data from Cuyahoga County Office of Homeless Services.

*Let's work together for a community...  
where people feel their public officials  
know their everyday challenges  
and aspirations.*

LMM, increasingly focused on being a catalyst, will continue to partner with public and private entities to create innovative solutions to these significant needs. We have launched Central Kitchen and Metro Metal Works as job-training social enterprises which provide skills and job placement along with the production of bike racks and meals for individuals who are homeless. This fall we will open a shipping container-turned-restaurant in Cleveland's North Coast Harbor that will provide employment and training opportunities for participants. We are piloting affordable housing for veterans and we operate the largest homeless shelter in the state of Ohio that not only provides beds but job training, work experience and housing readiness programs. Our re-entry services, carried out through our nationally recognized Community Re-Entry program, have a longstanding, positive influence in the community.

LMM remains committed to addressing these challenges and you have my commitment, on behalf of the board and staff of LMM, to be a visible catalyst for self-sufficiency, responsible citizenship and a renewed spirit of civic engagement. I'm reminded of the story when, in 1945, as Franklin Roosevelt's funeral train rolled north through Washington, D.C. a reporter saw a person watching and crying. The reporter asked, "Why are you here? Did you know Franklin Roosevelt?" The mourner replied: "No, I did not know President Roosevelt, but he knew me."

In our current national political climate let's work together for a community closer to home where people feel their public officials know their everyday challenges and aspirations; a sustainable community built to last; a community not grasped in ownership but claimed in responsibility.. Second chances and inherent dignity are what moved farmers, shopkeepers and political refugees alike to begin the experiment of the United States, and they are also the core commitments and story of LMM.

I offer the support of Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry for our common priorities and wish you the very best for your leadership in this new office. May you find joy and fulfillment in this important work on behalf of all people of Cuyahoga County.



Andrew D. Genszler  
President & CEO  
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry

## **Dear County Executive:**

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is the regional transportation and environmental planning agency for Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain and Medina counties.

It is our belief that effective public policy requires "vision," the idea to see and seek out a course that is bigger than an individual agency. Vision requires one to quiet the mind of clutter and outside pressure, allowing one to see innovation where it may not be readily apparent. For example, one could envision President Lincoln, signing the Pacific Railway Act of 1862 (which developed the transcontinental railroad) while hearing the distant rumble of cannon fire. While Lincoln harnessed every ounce of his strength to keep the North and South together he had the foresight to also envision a country that was bound East to West and the open mind to see the innovation of rail within a world dominated by horse and buggy. This lesson is instructive as leaders struggle to see a vision for transportation in the 21st Century.

NOACA developed its own vision in 2014 which states:

**NOACA will STRENGTHEN regional cohesion, PRESERVE existing infrastructure, and BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system to SUPPORT economic development and ENHANCE the quality of life in Northeast Ohio.**

The NOACA vision statement is applied to everything we do within the planning and programming of infrastructure in Northeast Ohio. In this way, we are following in the footsteps of predecessors whose infrastructure vision was the byproduct of innovation.

The County Executive is in unique position to assist NOACA in fulfilling our vision. We pose the following questions and background information to guide you in offering that assistance.

### **STRENGTHEN regional cohesion**

*Question: How will you work to STRENGTHEN regional cohesion?*

Infrastructure can serve as a means of strengthening regional cohesion. This hinges on coordination with NOACA, as well as, the Ohio Department of Transportation (District 12), the Cleveland-Cuyahoga Port Authority and the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority among others. Meanwhile, you have the tools to strengthen the relationship with your localities. This includes assisting with the local share for infrastructure projects. The absence of a local share is often a reason a project cannot get off the ground.

### **PRESERVE existing infrastructure**

*Question: How will you work to PRESERVE existing infrastructure?*

Roadway infrastructure is the backbone of America's transportation system and maintaining it in a state of good repair is essential for all modes of transportation. Every community in NOACA's five County region maintains local federal-aid roadways. NOACA is currently developing the scope of a regional asset management project that will inventory and repair paving conditions in Northeast Ohio. Cuyahoga County's full participation is key to this effort.

### **BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system**

*Question: How will you BUILD a sustainable multimodal transportation system?*

A sustainable, multimodal transportation system is an expression of freedom: the ability to go where you want to



go, when you want to go, however you would like to go. It begins with the premise that all modes of transportation are deserving of consideration. Public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities must be strengthened along with our road network to ensure a fully comprehensive and integrated transportation system is available to the residents and visitors of Cuyahoga County and the region.

### **SUPPORT economic development**

*Question: How will you SUPPORT economic development through infrastructure investments?*

Transportation supports a robust economy. Commerce depends on it to move goods, services, and people. Furthermore, strategic infrastructure investments can improve the regional economy on many levels. Look no further than RTA's HealthLine, the Bus Rapid Transit route along Euclid Avenue, to see the power of infrastructure as a tool of economic development. This includes 13,000 new jobs, 4000 new residential units, and 7.9 million square feet in commercial development.

### **ENHANCE the quality of life in Northeast Ohio**

*Question: How will you improve the region's infrastructure to ENHANCE the quality of life in Northeast Ohio?*

The impact of transportation on the quality of life is extremely profound. Providing safe and abundant access to employment, education, medical, cultural and recreational facilities is a core function of government. Yet, disinvestment in our infrastructure due to lack of funding to our region is even more profound. Cuyahoga County residents pay approximately \$346.6 million per year in Federal and state gas taxes and license taxes. The Cuyahoga County Executive is a critical advocate for Northeast Ohio in receiving its fair share. This has substantial import on our quality of life. For example, NOACA is accountable to regional taxpayers for meeting air quality standards under the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ). Yet there is an open question as to whether funding will be proportional to this enhanced responsibility and control. Therefore, in not receiving adequate funding, enhancing the quality of life is a challenge and the sheer maintenance of it is a day-to-day struggle.

NOACA looks forward to working with you to make our region a stronger place. Cuyahoga County is the center of the region, but all components within our five counties are critical. Regional coordination has been a hallmark of our agency and we encourage you to develop a vision that highlights this cooperative approach to governance.



Grace Gallucci  
Executive Director  
Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

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## **Dear County Executive:**

The good news is ... you will begin your term at a time of great excitement for all Northeast Ohioans; Cleveland's ability to capture the Republican National Convention is validation — proof positive — that our region is emerging

from its darkest days, and the return of LeBron James certainly helps to boost our collective spirit.

Diehard civic boosters — and I certainly include myself among them — have always held out the fervent hope that our region will return to the glory days of the past, and despite our continuing loss of jobs I believe we are on the cusp of stabilizing, and eventually creating additional economic opportunities for residents of Cuyahoga County.

However, the one persistent statistic that holds us back is the number of gunshot incidents in our neighborhoods; while the perception of violence might be worse than the reality, every time the body count increases our reputation suffers as a city, county and region.

Controlling positives (such as increases in the number of new downtown apartments and condos coming on line) is indeed much easier than controlling negative human behaviors ... such as the propensity of young men of color to mindlessly engage in gunplay. But their behavior will continually act as an anchor, an Achilles heel if you will, dragging the whole of the county down. We must take a proactive approach to solving this problem.

As other areas of the country have come to realize, due to the surfeit on weapons extant in America (and the reluctance of our elected officials and the Courts to enact legislation to curtail the spread of handguns) we are not going to be able to "police" our way out of the problem. But, as some programs are proving, "Nothing stops a bullet like a job."

*While the perception of violence might be worse than the reality, every time the body count increases our reputation suffers as a city, county and region.*

The root causes of the inner city (and increasingly suburban) gun violence are systemic and long-standing. We didn't get to this point overnight, and those who seek quick fix solutions will repeatedly be disappointed. But there are glimmers of hope on the horizon.

One area in which hope is beginning to manifest itself is in the area of urban agriculture. While most elected officials have yet to become convinced that the locavore movement is here to stay and can create decent paying jobs, some of us are proving them wrong ... albeit only with baby steps to date, but our movement is growing.

Efforts are beginning to get underway to engage these at-risk youth that are in danger of dropping out of society and engaging in violent criminal behavior. Some of us are attempting to peer mentor these young people (many of whom are formerly incarcerated and thus negatively credentialed), but without the ability to provide them with some type of employment all of our efforts will be for naught.

We have demonstrated that jobs can be created in the field of urban agriculture; certainly not on the scale of a new auto plant coming into the area, but it's a growth industry nonetheless. While this sector won't prove to be a panacea for all of our urban ills, it can employ a decent number of those at-risk of running afoul of the law. And, in actuality, their numbers are not as large as their negative behaviors tend to lead us to believe. We're not talking thousands, but hundreds.

There are a number of local, grassroots organizations and individuals toiling away in obscurity as they attempt to

train young people in the requisite skills to enter this growth sector, but their efforts have by-and-large been ignored. The key, I believe, is in designing culturally relevant programs that engage these youth on their own level, in language they comprehend, spoken to them by people they tend to trust. Hard work, decent pay, and tough love administered by “older brothers” is the only real answer.

The most positive aspect of urban agriculture is that while it’s front-loaded (the upfront costs are what keeps the industry from growing exponentially), with the right cash crops, efforts can be financially self-sustaining and profitable in less than five years.

The number of men of color who wish to step up and help to solve this problem is growing. These dedicated individuals — who operate primarily outside of the mainstream and therefore often are not sophisticated in fundraising techniques — need and deserve help from local institutions, and, most importantly, from local government at all levels.



Mansfield Frazier  
Executive Director  
Neighborhood Solutions



## Dear County Executive:

I expect that by now you have been bombarded with requests and inquiries pertaining to a wide range of policy choices that fall under the purview of county government. I am not writing to lobby your support on behalf of a particular issue or constituency. Rather, my goal is to persuade you that every other decision you and the County Council will face requires better data than you currently have at your disposal. As a result, it is incumbent on you to push for investments in the kinds of data infrastructure that will best inform the most pressing issues facing our community.

Data on human services are a precious resource and the good news is that our government agencies and their community partners are expert in maintaining myriad data to meet all types of needs. The reality is that some of the greatest value in our data lie in their ability to understand reality in new ways, knowledge that only emerges when we integrate data across time and across domains. By doing so, we can come to better understand how individuals and families experience our community and the services and supports that exist.

One other fortunate reality is that Cuyahoga County has been a leader in pursuing the kinds of insights that emerge from integrated data. For more than a decade, the County and its partners have supported the integration of data on early childhood services, allowing us to better understand how preschool experiences impact the trajectory of young children. This positioned us well for a longitudinal study of young children, from birth to third grade, using exclusively existing administrative records linked at the individual level. This work exams how early childhood experiences influence kindergarten readiness and 3rd grade reading proficiency. The existing infrastructure allowed CWRU to successfully compete for a MacArthur Foundation award to explore how the properties and neighborhoods where a child in Cleveland lives before kindergarten influences their

school readiness and early success. These studies seek to identify the policy levers that can be used to help children arrive better prepared for school. Similarly, we successfully competed for a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to demonstrate the value of integrated data systems to inform effective collaboration. The grant will examine the transition to adulthood among youth who experience foster care or juvenile justice, focused on outcomes such as dropping out of high school, unemployment, homelessness and criminal involvement.

Cuyahoga County became a national leader in the social impact bond movement by becoming the first county to launch a Pay For Success initiative in 2013. In addition to being an innovative method to bring new funding into the testing of innovative services, this approach draws heavily on integrated data. The County’s Pay For Success initiative tests a new method for serving homeless families designed to bring about reductions in the length of foster care stays by children in those families. Aside from being better for the children, it also saves county funds in avoided days in foster care. The development of the initiative relied on integrating data on shelter stays from the County’s Homeless Management Information System with data on child welfare involvement from the County’s Division of Children and Family Services. This is a perfect example of how two different systems interact with the same families and it can only be understood by integrating the data from each. In just a two year period, the preliminary analysis showed that more than 700 children were involved with both systems and had foster care expenses of over \$18 million associated with them. The potential for savings and better outcomes for families is clear.

*I urge you to consider how a data integration agenda can serve to support and enhance the policy agenda for this community.*

Investing in data infrastructure and data-based decision making requires leadership from the top. If left to themselves, most agencies and organizations will not think or desire to share their data. There are barriers to be overcome in such integration efforts, from technological, to ethical, to logistical. As County Executive you can have a direct impact on the progress towards the better use of integrated data to inform action.

1. Make data sharing a priority – A first but crucial step involves sending a clear message that data are not a resource to be hidden away within agencies but rather a resource to be used to benefit the residents of our community. Agency leadership should be expected to know what data they have, its validity and salience for decision making, and be able to contribute to developing important questions that cross institutional boundaries.
2. Invest in the County’s ability to integrate data – County departments are among the largest holders of vital data in our community. So much more would be possible if the County itself worked to integrate its own data holdings first. The integration of data from such operations as homeless services, child welfare, public assistance, Medicaid, child care subsidies, and child support enforcement would go a long way toward better understanding the experiences of families in our community.

3. Establish strategic partnerships around data – The County can lend its support and expertise to others operating in the county that are potential data partners. These would include such public sector partners as the public school districts, the public housing authority, the courts, and the drug, alcohol, and mental health services board. This could also include private partners such as schools, hospitals, and social service providers. These entities touch the lives of many families and would stand to benefit from learning from integrated data.

4. Mobilize around questions requiring integrated data – Often the most important questions cross the boundaries of programs, organizations, and systems. By their very nature, the answers require collaboration across institutions. We should not shy away from these questions because they are too hard to answer. Rather, we should seek these questions and build the partnerships needed to get the answers.

I wish you the best as you take the reins of this great county. With your leadership, the lives of the residents can be dramatically improved over time. I urge you to consider how a data integration agenda can serve to support and enhance the policy agenda for this community.



Rob Fischer, Ph.D.  
Co-Director, Center on Urban Poverty  
and Community Development  
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School  
of Applied Social Sciences  
Case Western Reserve University



## Dear County Executive:

“Do you know your status?” This question saves lives and is increasingly being asked around the County; not only at community health fairs, but at primary care visits, in the emergency department, and on campuses.

One in five people living with HIV do not know it. This means that they are not benefitting from a system of care to keep them healthy and could unknowingly pass the virus to someone else.

When considering those who are newly infected – rates in County municipalities outside of Cleveland have steadily increased over the last 20 years to over a third of new infections. Over 40 percent of new cases are among our younger residents, aged 13 to 29; over half among residents of color. And our lowest resource communities are being hit the hardest. Those who are becoming infected are young and “healthy” and not used to seeking health care services and/or are in communities that have historically been underserved by the health care system. Increased testing is intended to target these populations.

***One in five people living with HIV do not know it.***

Almost a decade ago, the CDC recommended that every American aged 13 to 64 be tested for HIV once in their lifetime and more often if they are at increased risk for HIV infection. Yet many health care providers are wary of talking about sex and other risk factors with their patients, don’t feel that they have the resources to test, or are inadequately prepared to counsel their patients who receive a positive result. Through the Affordable Care Act, insurance plans

are required to cover HIV tests without a cost share as part of the women’s health benefit package. Medicaid, which is insuring a growing number of County residents, also covers HIV testing. Many of our local medical systems are Ryan White service providers (they receive federal funding to provide HIV-related health care services to those who are un- and underinsured) and have case managers on staff who are prepared to discuss positive diagnosis with patients. These resources remove many of the barriers that health care providers face in billing for HIV tests and supporting those who are found to be positive, but we must become more comfortable offering HIV tests in mainstream health care settings, and as patients, asking for a test if one isn’t offered.

We have learned a lot in the field of HIV over the past few years. One of the most important (and actionable) breakthroughs is that we now understand that individuals who have HIV are unlikely to spread the virus if they are on medications and achieving undetectable viral loads. By beginning therapy as soon as possible, individuals that have been diagnosed with HIV increase their likelihood of staying healthy and living a long life. Yet we have also learned that of the individuals diagnosed with HIV nationally, only 25 percent are benefitting from the full range of available treatment and support services and have undetectable viral loads.

There are many reasons why people turn down an HIV test when offered. They may not want to know their status – concerned that medications are unaffordable if they are positive or fearing the stigma around HIV that still plagues many communities because of misinformation about the disease or who becomes infected. The increased offering of HIV tests in the community and through the health care system will normalize the test and help identify individuals living with HIV and get them into care early in their disease progression.

We have an incredible network of HIV prevention and service providers in Cuyahoga County that have collectively kept our rates of new infection low, and provide a safety net of HIV health care services for people who cannot afford them. But we still have work to do to achieve the goal of ending the HIV epidemic both locally and around the country.

We know what to do. The first step is to take the test.

I encourage you in your new role to continue to ask all Cuyahoga County residents, “do you know your status?” I urge you to encourage all county employees to ask this question of themselves and their clients. If, as a community, we make this single question a priority, new cases of HIV will be reduced, positively impacting individuals and families of Cuyahoga County.



Melissa Federman  
Director, AIDS Funding Collaborative  
Treuhaft Chair for Health Planning,  
The Center for Community Solutions



## Dear County Executive:

As Cuyahoga County Executive, you are in a unique position to shape the future of our community. I write to offer some thoughts and suggestions regarding areas of need in our county, as seen through the lens of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Legal Aid serves clients in Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain Counties. We are a nonprofit law firm focused on shelter, safety and economic security for low income people. Legal Aid provides services addressing a wide range of community needs including: consumer, disability, domestic violence, education, employment, family law, health, housing, foreclosure, immigration, public benefits, utilities, and tax. Our mission is to secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low income and vulnerable by providing high-quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.

Legal Aid recently conducted a legal needs assessment. We asked clients and various individuals who work with low income people to provide input about the problems or issues of the low income community. Some of the pressing problems of the low income population in Legal Aid's service area—identified through our legal needs assessment and through our clients' experiences—include (1) safety and education of children; (2) lack of access to services; and (3) affordable and quality housing issues. I offer the following thoughts and suggestions on these topics:

### Children's Issues

- On January 1, 1998, the Ohio Legislature enacted Revised Code Section 3109.042 that provides in pertinent part that "[a]n unmarried female who gives birth to a child is the sole residential parent and legal custodian of the child..." Since that time, legal advocates have seen consistent unwillingness by law enforcement to assist the biological mother with enforcing her legal rights under this statutory provision. Often, the person who surreptitiously takes the child(ren) is only the putative father who has neither established paternity through the courts, nor filed a paternity affidavit acknowledging the parent-child relationship. Domestic violence victims are regularly told that they must initiate a court action to regain possession of their children who are being wrongfully withheld from them. Disregard for the statute causes risk of harm to both mothers and children in these emotionally charged situations. Creation of a protocol pursuant to the statute would provide more safety for all parties involved, including officers called to the scene of a domestic dispute.
- Every year more and more Cuyahoga County children are attending charter schools. While we are fortunate to have in Cuyahoga County some of the best rated charter schools in the state, many of the charter schools here receive lower ratings from the Ohio Department of Education than their public district counterparts. Through our education work we see children cycling through these underperforming charter schools where they are not provided with quality education, special education services, or English Language Learner supports. The availability of high-quality education for all Cuyahoga County children is integral to the development of a talented workforce and a strong future for the county. As such, we encourage you to promote quality standards for Cuyahoga County charter schools.

### Lack of Access to Services

- Cuyahoga County residents with limited English proficiency (LEP) face pressing access issues. When not provided with interpreters or translated documents, people with LEP are often unable to access vital services like public benefits, school services for their children, medical care, other social services, and access to the justice system. Federal law requires that any agency receiving

federal funding must provide meaningful language access to persons with LEP. Our work with the LEP community has shown us that many agencies are unaware of this obligation. Your office is in a unique position to coordinate efforts among all county agencies to ensure compliance with federal and state language access laws, making sure that all county residents have equal access to important county services.

### Affordable/Quality Housing Issues

- One look at the waiting lists for CMHA public housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program illustrates that our community needs additional affordable and quality rental housing for low income individuals. Another challenge that our community faces is keeping low income individuals in homes they already own to prevent vacancies and blight. For individuals who fall behind on their property taxes, the County's sale of those tax liens to debt collectors may increase foreclosures. This foreclosure increase is likely because the tax lien purchasers charge a statutory interest rate of 18% as well as attorney's fees, causing the original tax debts to grow substantially. In 2014, the County wisely decided to exclude from the September 2014 tax lien sale those properties with a tax homestead exemption—i.e., properties owned and occupied by elderly or disabled individuals. This policy should enable more elderly and disabled homeowners to bring their property taxes current rather than falling into foreclosure. We urge you to continue this policy into 2015 and beyond. We also urge the County to continue evaluating whether tax lien sales—which generate revenue in the short term—actually maintain a viable residential property tax base over the long term. Some indicators suggest that these sales increase vacancies and blight, thereby eroding the tax base of the County.
- Homeowners and tenants with certain medical conditions face life-threatening situations when their utilities are disconnected. Although the submission of a medical certificate to the utility company is supposed to protect such vulnerable consumers, Legal Aid has seen numerous instances in which consumers are threatened with or experience a shut-off, despite a valid medical certificate. The utility shut-off can trigger serious medical problems, make a home uninhabitable, and force the resident to seek housing elsewhere. Enforcement of existing protections for the medically vulnerable can stabilize families and neighborhoods.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Legal Aid's thoughts on a few ways to improve our great community. We look forward to working together with you to make Cuyahoga County even stronger!



Colleen M. Cotter, Esq.  
Executive Director  
The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland



### Dear County Executive:

Cuyahoga County is in an exciting and pivotal time in its history. I am sure as you read these letters many issues, priorities and challenges will come to light. You have chosen

to embrace a role that insists that you choose where resources will be directed. I extend my best wishes for wisdom and a steady hand to guide you.

I would like to draw your attention to the dilemma of girls in our county today. Nearly 7,200 girls and 3,500 volunteers are members of Girl Scouts in Cuyahoga County. With your help we could serve so many more. In a recent study “The State of Girls: Unfinished Business” the Girl Scout Research Institute (GSRI) stakes out key issues and major trends affecting girls’ health development today. The issues below apply to Cuyahoga County, and I ask you to consider the action associated with each issue.

**OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME** *State of Girls finding: Extracurricular activities help young people develop positive life skills like leadership and teamwork, but not all girls have access to and opportunities for enrichment activities outside of school.*

**What Girl Scouting does:** A study by GSRI in 2012 reached the following conclusion: Girl Scouting works. Women who were Girl Scouts as girls display positive life outcomes to a greater degree than women who were not Girl Scouts. These outcomes pertain to sense of self, community service, civic engagement, education, and income. And this is the case for all Girl Scout alumnae, across age/generation, social class, race, and engagement in other extracurricular activities.

**Cuyahoga County Action:** *Fund more out- of- school time programming.*

**EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS** *State of Girls finding: Many girls are graduating from high school and going to college, but Hispanic/Latina girls are at particular risk for dropping out of school.*

**What Girl Scouting does:** The GSRI study Linking Leadership to Academic Success finds that Girl Scouting helps all girls flourish academically by providing them a supportive, encouraging environment that allows them to take age-appropriate risks. The study found that the leadership skills girls develop through Girl Scouting, such as problem solving and a willingness to seek and take on challenges, contribute to their academic engagement and achievement. It also found that Girl Scout-ing influences academic success as much as, and sometimes more than, positive relationships with teachers and weekly participation in out-of-school-time activities—factors known to boost success in school.

Importantly, the content of all Girl Scout National Leadership Journeys and national proficiency badge activities have been correlated by grade level to national Common Core State Standards; 21st Century Skills standards; financial literacy education standards; and health and physical education, language arts, math, science, and social studies learning objectives for all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

**Cuyahoga County Action:** *Fund more opportunities for youth development in school time programming.*

**EMOTIONAL HEALTH** *State of Girls finding: Girls are experiencing threats to their emotional health such as depression and bullying.*

**What Girl Scouting does:** Girl Scouting is committed to supporting girls’ emotional health and well-being through the National Leadership Journeys. Activities that help girls develop self-confidence, healthy-living practices, and relationship skills are woven through all Leadership Journey experiences. Further, Girl Scouts recently launched a bullying prevention program called BFF (Be a Friend

First), giving middle school girls valuable skills to develop healthy relationships, prevent bullying behavior, and become peacemakers in their schools and communities, all of which help girls develop confidence and friendships in the process.

**Cuyahoga County Action:** *Fund more opportunities for youth development in school time programming.*

**PHYSICAL HEALTH** *State of Girls finding: Girls are experiencing health problems like obesity at a high rate, and their physical activity levels are low.*

**What Girl Scouting does:** Health and fitness have been part of Girl Scouting for more than 100 years. Healthy-living activities including physical exercise, healthy eating habits, and sports are woven through the Girl Scout Leadership Journeys in varied ways to provide girls with choice and flexibility. Additionally, girls are offered a wide range of options to improve their physical health and expose them to new interest areas through national badge activities like Athlete and Healthy Living.

Data is not destiny. As the premier leadership development organization for girls, Girl Scouts is committed to ensuring that all girls develop to their full potential. It is time to stop squandering half of the county’s population. I know that alumnae of our program Athlete, Healthy Living earn more than their peers, are more likely to vote, and report that they are happier in their career and family. Giving girls these experiences will make our county, and the world, a better place.



Jane Christyson  
CEO  
Girl Scouts of North East Ohio

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## Dear County Executive:

Opiate addiction and overdose is a major public health problem in the United States. It has contributed significantly to accidental deaths among those who use, misuse or abuse illicit and prescription opioids. In Ohio, there was a 366% increase in drug overdose deaths from 2000 to 2012 resulting in 1,914 deaths. Over this period, prescription drugs have served as the gateway to opiate addiction.

The economic costs of drug use are enormous: In 2007 alone, illicit drug use cost the United States more than \$193 billion in lost productivity, healthcare, and criminal justice costs. But the human costs are worse. Nationwide, drug-induced overdose deaths now surpass homicides and car crash deaths in America.

*Each year, complications of addiction claim 200,000 women’s lives. Without treatment, women die.*

Alex was raised by a professional single mother in the western suburbs of Cuyahoga County. Alex began experimenting with alcohol and marijuana at the age of 15. “When I took my first Oxycontin, it was like an epiphany. I only craved heroin and opiates from that point,” she said.

Alex was placed in two residential treatment programs and following her successful discharge from each, she relapsed and ultimately exhausted the health insurance benefit. Her addiction progressed. Her mother secured custody of her two year old son, and she was forced to make the difficult choice of forcing Alex to leave the family home or enroll in the publically funded Women's Recovery Center's outpatient alcohol and other drug treatment program.

Alex has celebrated one year of sobriety. She has successfully regained custody of her son and is rebuilding a relationship based on trust with her mother. Alex exudes pride in stating that she has given her mother a key to her apartment to demonstrate her commitment to healing and long term recovery.

Alex represents the current face of the addiction crisis that is separating families. Addiction affects the whole family - young, teenage, or grown-up children; wives or husbands; brothers or sisters; parents or other relatives and friends. One family member addicted to alcohol and drugs means that the whole family suffers. Addiction is a family disease that stresses the family to the breaking point, impacts the stability of the home, the family's unity, mental health, physical health, finances, and overall family dynamics.

Based on experience and studies conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), addiction manifests itself very differently for women than men; therefore, it is estimated that more than 95% of the clients served through the Women's Recovery Center have experienced trauma such as sexual assault or molestation. Often clients utilize alcohol and other drugs to self-medicate to avoid the memories of those traumas. The results of the mother's addiction continue through the next generation of their children. Substance abusing mothers are emotionally and physically absent from the time of bonding and for those mothers that use alcohol and other drugs during the pregnancy the costs are even higher.

Addiction is a disease that progresses much more rapidly in women causing physical harms and debilitation occur at a much more rapid rate. According to SAMHSA, it is estimated that 6.5 million American women are diagnosed with substance abuse or dependence. Each year, complications of addiction claim 200,000 women's lives. This figure represents four times the number of women that die from breast cancer. Without treatment, women die.

Increasingly, clients in publicly funded alcohol and other drug treatment are entering with a heroin or other opioid as their drug of choice. Data from the treatment admissions system show that almost every demographic increasingly reporting heroin as a primary drug of choice over time. The percentage of people reporting heroin as a primary drug of choice was higher for women than men. The average percentage of Whites reporting heroin as a primary drug of choice was two-and-a-half times than of African Americans. Most age groups show increases in the percentage reporting heroin as a primary drug of choice, with 18 to 24 years and 25 to 34 year olds reporting the largest increases.

With the increase of opioid addiction, in Cuyahoga County the drug detoxification facilities often find that the need exceeds their capacity. Detoxification facilities have imposed a limitation on the medically indigent to one medically monitored detox admittance each year. Detoxification from opioids is not a life threatening process that requires medical monitoring; therefore, many women are being told to go home and detox and simply stop using.

But often they are not able to stop using until they are admitted to a treatment facility. This interim period is a dangerous time for an opiate addict. Feeling the full impact of withdrawal symptoms, many women are tempted to relapse to simply alleviate the symptoms.

Having witnessed the emergence of the opiate crisis, the Women's Recovery Center is poised to proactively and comprehensively implement *Treatment on Demand* will nearly eliminate waiting periods and establish a model for non-medical detoxification program to engage and retain as a partner in the treatment process. The treatment curriculum based on best practice models and therapeutic interventions will meet a woman at the point that she is reaching out and motivated to accept change. Treatment is guided with the understanding that each client has individual motivations for healing and recovery. Through dedicated and individualized treatment planning, Recovery is Possible.

As President Obama announced the outline for the Drug Policy for the 21st Century, for too many Americans drug use has the potential of the jeopardizing families, communities and neighborhoods. The Administration's Drug Policy reflects this understanding by emphasizing prevention and access to treatment over incarceration, pursuing "smart on crime" rather than "tough on crime" approaches to drug-related offenses, and support for early health interventions designed to break the cycle of drug use, crime, incarceration, and re-arrest. As County Executive, please use your position to promote healing as the first step to strengthen the family for independence and self-sufficiency.



Mary Jane Chichester  
Executive Director  
Women's Recovery Center



## Dear County Executive:

I am grateful for projects such as this by the good folks at Community Solutions to address issues in our growing, vital and revitalizing community.

It is clear, both before and since the enormous repercussions of our county government scandal which led to the creation of a new form of county government and the establishment of a County Executive, that the major work of county government is still in need of significant attention. Understanding the enormously complex social service system and responsibility of the county needs to be a priority.

The County Executive must be one who is interested in the whole of county government in terms of making it more effective. While economic development is significant for the life of all in our county, there must also be a significant, executive focus on the chronic, neighborhood-wide needs in Cuyahoga County.

The social service complex, a system that utilizes over 70% of the county budget, is always in need of close examination in regard to service delivery overlap and the burdensome administrative processes demanded of agencies serving people in need. Far, far more time is spent by agencies in fulfilling compliance paperwork than in the delivering of

intervention services directly to their client base. Further, overlap in mission needs to be addressed within the system.

I also think that the ever-present reluctance to recognize the impact and power within the faith-based community for meaningful partnerships and social service delivery that effectively meets neighborhood need is a great drawback to moving forward with effective community solutions. The County Executive could be a vital force and voice in establishing such creative, community enriching partnerships.



Rev. Dr. Kenneth W. Chalker  
Senior Pastor  
University Circle United Methodist Church



## Dear County Executive:

There can be no world class city or region without a world class public transit system. As the County has better positioned itself for the future over the past four years, so has RTA. With service levels increasing slightly and fares stabilized, ridership growth has been experienced in each of the last three years.

Locally as well as nationally, public transit ridership is growing significantly and continues to increase in critical importance to both attract and retain the millennials that have shown us that owning a car is not a "must have" in this new age society, and to provide needed and critical services to our growing number of senior citizens that rely on the services that public transit provides.

The RTA serves 50 million annual customers, approximately 200,000 each weekday, which is more than Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton combined. 63% of trips are work related and 22% for education. Between 30% and 40% of RTA customers elect to use RTA with the remainder saying RTA is their only form of transportation. We also provide critical services for major tourism events such as Senior Games, Gay Games & RNC, and to special events such as Browns, Indians and Cavs games. RTA is continually recognized as being one of the top transit systems in the nation.

As you may know, RTA is governed by a 10-member Board of Trustees, three of whom are appointed by Cuyahoga County in staggered, 3-year terms.

RTA has an annual operating budget of approximately \$275 million and an annual capital budget of approximately \$75 million. RTA employs 2,400 individuals with 85% being unionized.

As you put together your transportation policy for the County, I request that you consider the RTA's opportunities and challenges listed below.

### Challenges

- Maintaining an aging infrastructure
- Dealing with job and population migration to hard to serve locations
- Not being able to financially respond to increasing demands for more services
- "Cautiously Optimistic" about Public Square make-over,

our cities traditional transportation hub:

- 40,000 customers daily use buses on Public Square
- 30,000 customers daily use the trains at Tower City
- Reductions in funding by State and Federal Government
  - Federal funding reduced based upon relative population loss
  - State of Ohio funding has been reduced by 80% since 2002
  - Ohio is 12th in public transit ridership but 45th in funding
  - Less than 1% of ODOT funds go to public transit

### Immediate financial challenges

- Funding for work-access program recently cut by Federal Government
  - Longstanding RTA / Cuyahoga County program
  - Funds will expire in April 2015
  - Only link for many residents to get to their jobs
- Funding needed to continue the evening and weekend Downtown Trolley Service
  - Funds will expire in October 2015
  - Critical for tourism and to downtown residents & venues

### Immediate Opportunities

- Work with employers to encourage their employees to try transit through incentives
- Work with Cuyahoga County to encourage development in areas served well by RTA
- Continue to appoint knowledgeable and committed members to the Board of Trustees

We work closely with the region's community partners like the Downtown Cleveland Alliance, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Midtown Cleveland, University Circle Inc., Ohio Department of Transportation, Senior Transportation Connection, Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency, and OhioMeansJobs (Workforce Investment Board). Additionally, we serve corporations and colleges with our services, and have special pass programs for many (U-Pass programs for CSU, CWRU, CCC, CMA, CIA and Bryant & Stratton, and Commuter Advantage Programs with 700 companies supporting over 14,000 local employees). Cuyahoga County now subsidizes passes for its employees at \$47 per month.

I look forward to working with you to meet the transportation needs and improve the quality of life for the citizens of Cuyahoga County.



Joseph A. Calabrese, CEO  
General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer  
Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority



## Dear County Executive:

The tidal wave of individuals turning 65 in our country, state and county has started and will continue through 2050. AARP reports that *from 2012 to 2050, the population age 65 and*

older is projected to more than double, to 89 million. The 107% growth rate for the 65+ population is more than five times as fast as that of the age 50–64 population and almost twice as fast as that of the population under age 50. What is very clear in the explosion of this aging group is that those attaining the age of 85 and older will encompass the most dramatic increase of older adults. In addition, the diversity of the population among older adults will mirror the changing faces of our country as a whole. Many will face economic hardships, face physical and cognitive disabilities and require assistance with daily care.

Ohio has the seventh largest 60-plus population in the United States. A 2012 study by Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami revealed that while Ohio's population growth has not increased significantly, the number of residents 65 and older has increased at a rate of nearly 8%. According to the US Census 2013 Quick Facts, persons 65 and older comprise 15.1% of Ohio's population; in Cuyahoga County persons 65 and older makeup 16.2% of our population. Over 12,000 older adults and adults with a disability received Medicaid waiver services to assist them with home and community based services enabling them to remain in the community and environment of their choice. While, thousands of others reside in the one-hundred nursing homes and sixty-six residential facilities within Cuyahoga County (ODJFS *Cuyahoga County Profile; Statistical and Demographic Data for 2009 – 2012*).

***Cuyahoga County is depending on you to develop an aggressive agenda to address the needs of a growing older adult population.***

These statistics more than elevate our consciousness of the population growth of older adults, they also serve to increase awareness of the anticipated need that these individuals will have as they age in our communities. It is incumbent among the County Executive to not only acknowledge the likely needs of older adults but to put into place action steps that will sustain and improve services that positively advance outcomes for seniors.

According to *Feed America* in 2012, Cuyahoga County had the highest number of food insecure residents in the state of Ohio at approximately 238,530 individuals. In March 2014 (the last month for which data are available) 38% of food assistance recipients in Cuyahoga County lived in a suburban area. As reported by Anne Goodman, President and CEO of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank many of the over 200,000 individuals are older adults. Ms. Goodman states, "What we're experiencing will only grow. We have to set up an infrastructure to deal with this. With people living longer and on a fixed income, they get poorer every year." (Roxanne Washington, *The Plain Dealer* 7/18/14).

As you know, Ohio relies heavily on counties to meet the needs of its older citizens, providing very few state resources except for Medicaid funds and allocating scarce federal resources. Cuyahoga County Health and Human Services levy funds that support home delivered and congregate meals become even more critical to feeding older adults as federal and state dollars decrease or become more narrowly targeted. Senior Centers and those entities that deliver meals become essential to making sure that older adults eat every day. When basic needs, including food are not met, both physical and mental health problems follow. While other

human service needs are certainly important as well, we would draw your attention to the fact that the proportion of the Cuyahoga County Health and Human services levy allocated to the care of seniors is significantly lower than their proportion of the County's population.

Other statistics that might help you to understand older adults in Ohio and Cuyahoga County include:

- 10.7% of older adults in Cuyahoga County have incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL).
- 210,000 Ohioans have been diagnosed with probable Alzheimer's disease and receive care from over 500,000 caregivers.
- In 2013, Cuyahoga County Department of Senior and Adult Services reported 3,566 allegations of abuse, neglect or exploitation.

A provider survey conducted as part of the development of a three year strategic plan for the Department of Senior and Adult Services (DSAS) concur with the above. The results of the survey revealed that providers identified challenges facing the elderly and disabled adults in Cuyahoga County as financial (14%) transportation (13%), healthcare (13%), decreased funding for services (11%), in addition to isolation, neglect/exploitation, mental health and accessibility to services.

As an agency that provides services to older adults in Cuyahoga County, we understand that older adults want to live independently in their communities. We also understand that accessibility to affordable healthcare, transportation, adequate housing and safe communities are important in maintaining the well-being of older adults. In order to successfully address the needs of older adults in Northeast Ohio, providers must develop partnerships that will better coordinate services to older adults. The success of these partnerships must include the County Executive and service departments managed under the administration of County offices. Outcomes of such partnerships include:

- Identifying strengths of individual organization's and providers in order to maximize outcomes for consumers;
- Increasing economic sustainability of agencies and providers by eliminating duplication of expensive services;
- Promoting innovation, adaptability and applicability of services that prove to be successful, and
- Development of a strong network of services throughout Cuyahoga County that provides optimal care of older adults.



Finally, livable communities for older adults are imperative if we are committed to keeping residents safe which allows them to continue to participate and contribute to the



sustainability of their communities. These communities should include homes that are adaptable, safe internally and externally and easy-to-use. They should include safe walking paths and have places that seniors can go for socialization. They should include grocery stores with healthy food selections, pharmacies and easy access to physical and mental health care. Transportation should be accessible and affordable. Safety forces should be visible and an intricate part of everyday activities and interactions with community residents.

Cuyahoga County is depending on you to develop an aggressive agenda to address the needs of a growing older adult population. These are citizens of our community that have made valuable contributions to Cuyahoga County and they have now earned the right to have your support to make sure that their safety and well-being is high on the county's agenda.

Thank you and the Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging stands ready to help you to help older adults age successfully.



Richard Browdie  
President/CEO  
Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging  
Member, Council on Older Persons (COOP)



## Dear County Executive:

This is an exciting time to govern in Cuyahoga County. Our region is finally earning a national spotlight. It's suddenly "cool" to be in Cleveland. Yet many Cuyahoga County residents are struggling. One of the biggest long-term concerns is the health of our community. Many people are dealing with uncontrolled chronic conditions that compromise their ability to work and handle other responsibilities. Their reliance on emergency care serves only as a stop-gap, and results in high health care costs for everyone.

In the 2014 national health rankings, Cuyahoga County was 65th out of 88 Ohio counties. At the same time, Cleveland was ranked the number one city nationally for overall access to health care.<sup>2</sup> Clearly there is a disconnect, and MetroHealth is the agent for building the bridge.

MetroHealth's mission, in partnership with Cuyahoga County, is leading the way to a healthier you and a healthier community. It is that mission that defines who we are and what we do. We are seeing a huge national shift in health care - to lifelong, comprehensive preventive care with mandated lower costs and more accessible, efficient facilities.

There are three main ways MetroHealth is embracing these changes in health care delivery to make it work for the citizens of Cuyahoga County:

- 1) Creating a new MetroHealth that is more accessible, more affordable and more accountable for the improved health of individuals and the community. This will be fueled by clinical and operational advances and will necessitate a physical transformation.
- 2) Weaving a network of community resources and healthcare providers focused on moving Cuyahoga County's health outcomes to the top of the charts from our current position at 65th place in the state.

3) Igniting economic development in the W 25th Street corridor. We can create a vibrancy that will attract business and investment, increase employment, reduce crime and be a catalyst for other neighborhood development.

Our main campus is big – 3 million square feet – it's sprawling and outdated. The oldest building is 102 years old, and experts agree that 75 percent of the campus has exceeded its useful life. Our facilities should be based on the needs of tomorrow, not just today. We envision a smaller footprint that is easier to navigate, with facilities specifically designed for efficient work flow and to easily accommodate our high-tech equipment.

To ensure easy access throughout Cuyahoga County, we will look at innovative health care delivery - in community centers, workplaces, and patients' homes. This should include alternative care models such as e-health, telemedicine and smartphone connectivity to providers. We must move from provider-centered care to patient-centered care, and from our convenience to the patients' convenience.

*The opportunities in front of us can lift the health of the entire community, make care more accessible and affordable for everyone, and be another source of immense civic pride.*

This is a new healthcare delivery model - preventive, continuous care instead of episodic, sick care, leading to sustainable health improvements and lower overall costs. We have already successfully implemented care following this model.

Together with Cuyahoga County, we established MetroHealth Care Plus, through the Medicaid expansion, and extended health coverage to 28,000 people who had been uninsured. The program has been recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and is being looked at as a potential national model. Health outcomes for diabetics in this program improved by 25 percent and for hypertensives by 10 percent. We increased access to primary care physicians by 50 percent and reduced MetroHealth emergency room visits by 60 percent. Through a partnership with state and federal government, we used \$35M of our funds to attract \$70M in matching federal funds to take care of the patients. And, we delivered this care for \$50M under expectations. Regular, patient-centered and activated care means better outcomes at much lower cost.



The second big opportunity we have is to weave a network of community resources and healthcare providers focused on the health outcomes of Cuyahoga County. One example is working with the Department of Children and Family Services in the creation of a medical home for children in foster care. We are monitoring the health care provided to all Cuyahoga County children in foster care, and we are already seeing improvements because chronic conditions are monitored and children are seeing their doctors quickly and regularly.

Another example is School Health. MetroHealth partnered with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District to send our physicians, nurses and psychologists into the schools to make health care more accessible. MetroHealth will provide access to health care to 11 CMSD schools during the 2014-15 school year. Working with additional area health systems and providers, we plan to eventually cover every CMSD school.

Our final opportunity is to ignite economic development in the city, specifically, the W. 25th St. corridor. Like in other Cleveland neighborhoods that have been revitalized, we will see a resurgence of commerce and new housing in this area as it becomes more attractive for investment and residential living.

We've had a strong partnership with the current County Executive and Council. We look forward to an equally strong partnership with the new County Executive as we forge a new health system created by the people of Cuyahoga County for the people of Cuyahoga County.

The opportunities in front of us can lift the health of the entire community, make care more accessible and affordable for everyone, and be another source of immense civic pride.



Akram Boutros, MD  
President and CEO  
The MetroHealth System

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## Dear County Executive:

Let me step back to 1969. That was when the Cuyahoga River caught fire, making Cleveland famous as a symbol for urban and environmental decay. That same year, in Washington, an amendment to the Older Americans Act created a program to engage 'retired and senior volunteers' in service. People were living longer, and wanted to remain active members of their community after they stopped working for a living. The program was brought to northeast Ohio three years later, and was housed in a small office at Cleveland City Hall.

Nearly 50 years later, our region is attracting attention again, this time for the right reasons. And the initiative that began in 1972 now reaches more than 2,000 people – older adults as well as younger ones – through the many programs run by the organization I represent, Greater Cleveland Volunteers.

As you take office, I want to encourage you to think about civic engagement – the sense of belonging to a community that leads people to take action. There is plenty of pride in the Cleveland region and optimism about its future. These passions can be harnessed to address the difficulties that persist – and we know there are still several: poverty in both the inner city and in the suburbs, inadequate education for too many children, long-term unemployment for those without up-to-date job skills.



Volunteers can help address these and many other issues. Your office can promote the volunteer service by:

- Informing citizens of the many local outlets for volunteerism, which include our organization, United Way, Business Volunteers Unlimited, and HandsOn Northeast Ohio.
- Encouraging Cleveland and other cities to join the 'Cities of Service' group (see <http://www.citiesofservice.org>). Other Ohio cities are part of this coalition but none are in Cuyahoga County.
- Establishing an office of civic engagement within the County. A number of municipalities have done this, including Kansas City and Philadelphia.

Civic engagement should be a priority for your administration for a number of reasons.

It builds community, on both a neighborhood level and on a municipal level. As a result, it makes people want to stay in the area, and it encourages former northeast Ohioans to come home. An article last year in *Crain's Cleveland Business* noted that "a thriving city is based on more than [real estate]. It's about creating a sense of community."

*There is plenty of pride in the Cleveland region and optimism about its future. These passions can be harnessed to address the difficulties that persist.*

It engages citizens with important social issues and can help achieve positive results. To cite one example, we manage a literacy tutoring program in 15 Cleveland schools. More than 180 volunteer tutors work with students who need to learn how to read. The children in the program do better on tests and have improved confidence in their capabilities.

These initiatives can make use of the talents of the County's growing population of seniors. 16.2% of the County's population is over age 65, which is more than 2% above the national average. And volunteerism is correlated with improved physical and mental health for older people.

Finally, volunteerism is cost-effective. Investing in the infrastructure for volunteer engagement more than pays for itself, in the amount of service that is provided to those who need it. Our agency's volunteers gave more than 206,000 hours of service last year, a contribution valued at approximately \$4.66 million. This figure is significantly more than the expenses we incurred to run our programs.

I wish you the best of success in your efforts to help our County continue to rise and flourish.



Joy Banish  
Executive Director  
Greater Cleveland Volunteers

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# Index

Zulma Zabala, <i>East End Neighborhood House</i> .....	1
Margaret W. Wong, <i>Margaret W. Wong &amp; Associates Co., LPA</i> .....	2
Bradley Whitehead & Deborah D. Hoover, <i>Fund for Our Economic Future</i> .....	4
Georgine Welo, <i>City of South Euclid</i> .....	5
Allison L.E. Wallace, <i>Neighborhood Centers Association</i> .....	6
William Tarter Jr., <i>Cleveland Young Professional</i> .....	6
Shirley Stineman & Kristin Warzocha, <i>Greater Cleveland Food Bank</i> .....	7
Angela Shuckahosee, <i>Cleveland Tenants Organization</i> .....	8
Charles R. See, <i>Community Re-entry Program, Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry</i> .....	9
Darby Bentoff Schwartz, <i>Arthritis Foundation</i> .....	10
William T. Ryan, <i>The Center for Health Affairs</i> .....	11
Jim Rokakis, <i>Thriving Communities Institute</i> .....	12
Rev. Max Rodas, <i>Guatemalan born/American Citizen</i> .....	13
Jill Rizika, <i>Towards Employment, Inc.</i> .....	13
Joel Ratner, <i>Cleveland Neighborhood Progress</i> .....	14
Robert Paponetti, <i>The Literacy Cooperative</i> .....	15
Patricia W. Nobili, <i>Achievement Centers for Children</i> .....	16
Stuart C. Mendel, <i>Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs, Cleveland State University</i> .....	17
Susanna H. Krey, <i>Sisters of Charity Foundation of Cleveland</i> .....	18
Bill Kitson, <i>United Way of Greater Cleveland</i> .....	19
Dana Irribarren, <i>Hunger Network of Greater Cleveland</i> .....	20
Melanie Hogan, <i>Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential (LEAP)</i> .....	21
Ashley Hartman, <i>Young Nonprofit Professionals Network</i> .....	23
Andrew D. Genszler, <i>Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry</i> .....	23
Grace Gallucci, <i>Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency</i> .....	24
Mansfield Frazier, <i>Neighborhood Solutions</i> .....	25
Rob Fischer, <i>Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences</i> <i>Case Western Reserve University</i> .....	26
Melissa Federman, <i>AIDS Funding Collaborative, The Center for Community Solutions</i> .....	27
Colleen M. Cotter, <i>The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland</i> .....	27
Jane Christyson, <i>Girl Scouts of North East Ohio</i> .....	28
Mary Jane Chichester, <i>Women's Recovery Center</i> .....	29
Rev. Dr. Kenneth W. Chalker, <i>University Circle United Methodist Church</i> .....	30
Joseph A. Calabrese, <i>Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority</i> .....	31
Richard Browdie, <i>Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging</i> .....	31
Akram Boutros, <i>The MetroHealth System</i> .....	33
Joy Banish, <i>Greater Cleveland Volunteers</i> .....	34



*Every effort was made to ensure that letters in Dear County Executive represent the diversity found in Cuyahoga County.  
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