

House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Community Action Akron Summit
Testimony for Ohio Commission on Minority Health

Monday, April 8, 2019 at 10 AM

Chairman Romanchuk, Rep West, and Distinguished Committee Members, in lieu of testifying in person, I am submitting this written testimony for consideration.

On behalf of Community Action Akron Summit, this is presented by Malcolm J. Costa, President and CEO of Community Action and Dr. Aimee Budnik, Pathways HUB Director. Mr. Costa has been President and CEO of Community Action for over 40 years. Dr. Budnik has a PhD in Prevention Science from the College of Public Health at Kent State University. Her research focuses on public health systems and services that examine the role of primary prevention and social determinants of health in communities. Prior to her work at Community Action, Dr. Budnik was a local WIC Director and Director of Welfare and Social Services in Connecticut. These positions framed her doctoral studies at Kent State University. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony about the Ohio Commission on Minority Health budget.

Community Action Akron Summit (CA) has been the designated lead agency (Akron and Summit County) to address poverty since 1964 with the mission to reduce poverty and promote self-sufficiency. "Maximum feasible participation" of the poor and has been the philosophy over our long history promoting economic opportunity, including all voices and individuals with lived experience in decision-making, and addressing Social Determinants of Health.

In Summit County, infant mortality is one indicator within which Social Determinants of Health contribute significantly to poor birth outcomes especially among African American families. In Summit County, disparities between white infant mortality and black infant mortality are 3-4.5 times with about 40% of the infant deaths attributed to prematurity which correlates with Social Determinants of Health, stress and access to health care. In 2015, countywide health leaders, agency and other community leaders researched evidenced-based models successful in reducing infant mortality and improving health equity in communities. The intensive research showed Pathways Community HUB as the evidence-based model with the greatest potential to impact this scourge.

CA has been an Ohio Commission on Minority Health grantee since January 2016. CA applied for the Pathways Community Hub Replication Grant upon being unanimously endorsed by Summit County Healthy Connections Network (HCN). HCN is a 20-year collaboration initiated by the Director of the Akron Health Department with all local health systems, the local FQHC, University of Akron, and every other significant health-related organizations, private or public in Summit County, whose mission is to provide 100% access, achieve zero disparities and ensure long standing safety net. The group voted to support the replication of the Pathways HUB; voting to contribute the entire HCN fund balance to CA was part of the endorsement, some \$6,000.

CA was awarded funding to develop this national, evidenced-based model to address infant mortality, African American infant mortality being the local and Ohio crisis. Since that time (2015) and as the result of

OCHM funding, Pathways HUB Community Action has attained National Certification for Pathways Community HUBs, executed four Medicaid Managed Care Contracts for reimbursement for CHWs' services rendered, trained over 30 CHWs and established a robust referral network to find pregnant women in need of services. In Program Year 2018, Community Action Pathways HUB enrolled 124 women (70% were at risk minority women). The women enrolled in Hub in 2018, exceeded the number of recommended prenatal visits demonstrating regular prenatal care, maintained health insurance continuously (123 of 124 women), and 1/3rd were enrolled in the 1st trimester of pregnancy and 50% were enrolled in the second trimester of pregnancy.

In 2018, based on preliminary program data, Our HUB Low Birth Weight rate for singleton births to African-American mothers was 10.9%. The Summit County LBW Rate for African American's was 14.2%. The HUB Pre-Term rate for singleton births to African-American mothers working with the Hub was 9.09% compared to the County rate of 14.1%.

Over 80% had documented 1 month well baby visit and documented health insurance. Despite the number of challenges facing these pregnant moms such as housing instability, limited social support, history of poor birth outcomes, and history of mental health, 89.5 of the babies born to HUB moms were healthy, full term, normal weight. Among African American babies, 90% of African American babies were healthy, full term and normal weight.

The Pathways Community HUB provides a single point of contact for individuals and families and Community Health Workers (CHWs) that coordinate evidence-based interventions to address the complex needs of the clients. The flow of information across the network via the data system creates efficiencies and reduces duplication because each family has one primary care coordinator. CHWs address the multitude of needs by opening and closing relevant pathways specific to the families' risk factors. CHWs maneuver through the complex systems in partnership with the clients and work to ensure the most critical needs are addressed. CHWs ensure that the necessary medical care, social supports and community resources are wrapped around families so that they may have the most successful birth outcomes.

One innovation of the model is that client's risk is tracked over time, measuring individual and system barriers. HUBs are not only able to track risk at the individual and community level but are also able to track short term and long-term outcomes. The pathways profile of each family is directly correlated to a family's social and health outcomes. Payments from Medicaid payers are tied to outcomes achieved, ensuring model fidelity because outcomes are standardized. Dollars invested in this model create alignment around specific, successful outcomes. Communities are empowered by the availability of data to address local needs and now can calculate the return on the investment.

Ohio Commission on Minority project has enabled Community Action to develop a strong network of Care Coordination Agencies (CCAs) who employ CHWs and have contracted relationships with Pathways HUB Community Action. The HUB launched with 2 CCAs in April 2016 and has expanded to a total of 7 CCAs. The 7 CCAs include 2 health systems (Summa Health, Akron Children's Hospital), 1 Federally Qualified Health Center (AxessPointe Community Health Centers), 2 mental health organizations (Minority Behavioral Health Group and Child Guidance & Family Solutions), health department (Summit County Public Health), and Faith- based organization (Charisma Community Connections/ Fame Fathers). CCA expansion in the network increased the number of CHWs on the ground to engage and enroll more women into the HUB. The funding from the Commission has enabled Community Action to provide technical assistance and training that ensured model fidelity and adherence to the evidenced based standards as the network grew.

One of the unique partnerships that has developed as a result has been between CA, Summit County Public Health, and Summit County Jobs and Family Services. This unique partnership leveraged funding to support the training and certification of 20 CHWs in the county. Prior to this training, almost 90% of the CHWs were unemployed and transitioning off benefits. These individuals had a strong interest and passion in working in the areas to address infant mortality. The selected individuals attended the CHW certification training and received funding to support their employment while they were training and establishing their caseloads for billing. This unique partnership not only increased the workforce of CHWs in the county, but also served as a mechanism for economic development.

The funding from the Commission helped to leverage other funding and partnerships including a 4-year partnership between Summit County Public Health and Community Action funded by Robert Wood Johnson focusing on quality improvement and health equity. The HUB in Summit County was a recipient of the Medicaid Grant in 2016 and again in 2018, as a result of the Commission HUB replication funding. This funding help to build HUB infrastructure that included expansion of HUB staff and CCAs in the community. Lastly, the HUB has served as the back-bone infrastructure for the 7 CCAs and a key component has been executing 4 of the 5 Medicaid MCO contracts that contribute to the sustainability of CHW workforce in the community.

Community Action supports the increased funding request of the Ohio Commission on Minority Health for Pathways Community HUBs in Ohio. This additional funding would allow HUBs to increase its capacity to serve additional high-risk pregnant women. The Commission on Minority Health has been a strong partner in addressing infant mortality and has effectively created a network of learning for the Ohio HUBs. Their leadership to fund this national model and support communities to replicate the Pathways Community HUB has been significant. The successes seen with the Pathways HUB Community Action are the in part to the funding to support the replication, the rigorous grant requirements, and uniform approach to evaluation through Research Evaluation Enhancement Program (REEP).

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