

ANCHOR INSTITUTIONS ADVOCATE FOR POLICIES TO BENEFIT COMMUNITIES

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Healthcare Anchor Network members are at the forefront of a movement of hospitals and health systems working to deploy their institutional resources — like hiring, purchasing and investment — to address economic and racial disparities. The goal is to improve the financial well-being of area residents and strengthen local economies. The growing network includes 50 health care systems representing more than 700 hospitals.¹

Member health systems believe that to improve outcomes and ensure long-term affordability, they must address the social determinants of health and invest in strategies that create equitable, engaged, connected and economically strong communities. They must help residents and the neighborhood to build community wealth that is long lasting.

Early on, network members decided to work at the system level on policy advocacy to have maximum impact on addressing health and economic inequity. Its Healthy Communities Policy Framework outlines the foundational elements of healthy communities, a healthy economy and a healthy planet. These elements include:

- employment and education for financial security
- connected and safe neighborhoods
- affordable, nutritious food access
- healthy and affordable housing
- safe, sustainable and affordable transportation

Both this framework and the network's advocacy efforts are based on shared values that align with Catholic social justice principles of collective action to address the root causes of poor health by achieving more systemic and impactful policy change.

EARLY POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

As health care systems implement regional or systemwide work to enhance their communities, they also are finding success in working together

for advocacy improvements at the federal level. Consider the case of Jeisson, a young man living in Richmond, Virginia. He was born to an immigrant family, which did not have any generational wealth or savings. Jeisson was the first in his family to graduate from college and was just starting out in a new job. Bon Secours Mercy Health's investment in the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust helped him buy his home — a home that will be permanently affordable in that community.² The federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program, which helps affordable homes like Jeisson's to be built, has contributed to the production of 1.3 million housing units since 1990.³

When the ACTION campaign — the coalition that works on advocacy efforts to strengthen the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit — asked the Healthcare Anchor Network to urge U.S. senators to co-sponsor the bill, Bon Secours Mercy Health responded to the call for support. The health system's leadership wrote a letter to key senators, and one of them co-sponsored the bill shortly thereafter. The health system's staff also worked with the ACTION campaign to see what additional help they could provide.

HOUSING FOR HEALTH POLICY DAY

The Healthcare Anchor Network held its first federal Housing for Health Policy Day on Feb. 28, 2019, in Washington D.C., to highlight the links between housing and health and to advocate for improvements in federal funding for affordable, healthy housing. Trinity Health, based in Livo-

nia, Michigan, brought the largest delegation to the event and met with representatives from Senate offices representing eight states and numerous House Congressional districts, including the current chair of the House Ways & Means Committee. Similarly, CommonSpirit Health held key meetings across the geographic and political spectrum including a meeting with the Senate Majority Leader's staff.

In total, 17 Healthcare Anchor Network member health systems attended Policy Day 2019, and 21 health systems signed onto the Principles for Healthy and Affordable Housing. Together, the health systems attending the policy day and signing onto the principles represented more than 500 hospitals in 37 states.⁴

The second Housing for Health Policy Day is scheduled for Thursday, March 12, 2020, on Capitol Hill. The Healthcare Anchor Network is thrilled that the Catholic Health Association, Bon Secours Mercy Health, Advent Health, the America's Essential Hospitals association and RWJBarnabas Health system in New Jersey have signed on as co-sponsors to date.

BENEFITS FOR HEALTH ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to their work on policy issues such as affordable housing, health systems continue to build relationships and good will with policymakers. For example, leaders and senior staff who participated in the policy day shared their anchor mission strategies and their activities to support the broader health and social needs of their com-

munities with congressional leaders.

Healthcare Anchor Network members reported that the congressional offices appreciated (and some were pleasantly surprised) to see health systems talking with them about housing and how that impacts health. Network members view their advocacy on issues related to social determinants of health as a contribution toward the larger community good. This advocacy is also important to health systems operating under value-based care where health care's bottom line depends on trying to encourage healthy populations and the availability of affordable housing, as well as other social determinants such as nutritious food, income security, reliable transportation and more.

WORKING TOGETHER ON SOCIAL DETERMINANTS

The Healthcare Anchor Network works with national issue groups to make it feasible and easier for network members to engage in policy advocacy related to the social determinants of health. For the most part, health system government relations, community benefit and other staff are not experts on housing, food, workforce development or other issues that come into play with social determinants of health. The network partnered with Enterprise Community Partners, a nonprofit focused on affordable housing, to provide ongoing housing policy information and suggestions regarding advocacy strategies. Enterprise Community Partners has presented to the network on advocacy group calls, and its representatives spoke at the Housing for Health Policy Day Congressional Briefing. The Healthcare Anchor Network conducts policy research and creates policy documents that include examples of its members' programs to help further brief members in these areas. This assistance allows network members to bring their health expert voices to the policy making arena on these vital issues.

THE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF THE HEALTH CARE SECTOR'S VOICE

Health care professionals and their institutions have the potential for significant public policy influence. Health care professionals are among the top trusted professions in the country, giving them a prominent voice in the policy arena.⁵ In addition, hospitals and health systems are some of the largest employers in their regions and states, making them key stakeholders and economic players.⁷ They often are seen as more impartial voices since the issues and programs around so-

WORKING TOGETHER

The Healthcare Anchor Network has a leadership team that helps to inform and shape network initiatives and provides strategic guidance. The leadership team consists of representatives from Catholic health systems CommonSpirit and Trinity Health, as well as Kaiser Permanente, ProMedica, Rush University Medical Center, and RWJBarnabas Health.

Several Catholic health systems are part of the Healthcare Anchor Network including AMITA Health, Bon Secours Mercy Health, CHRISTUS Health, CommonSpirit Health, Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady Health System, Providence St. Joseph Health, and Trinity Health.

cial determinants that they support are not for funds that go directly to the health systems. Since health institutions also know their elected officials and understand the local political dynamics, their voices are likely to be heard when they address these issues in terms of their impact on individual and public health—including the potential cost-savings.

In addition, health care institutions know about the needs identified in their Community Health Needs Assessments and can speak to how policy issues connect to those needs. Many also encourage their staffs to volunteer locally, such as on boards of local nonprofits, school boards, chambers of commerce and more. This helps them to get to know and tell the story of the community and its needs, as well as resources.

JOIN THE ADVOCACY EFFORTS

The Healthcare Anchor Network is collaborating on policy advocacy related to social determinants of health with many of the other hospital associations, including CHA, which is co-sponsoring the Housing for Health Policy Day 2020. We urge other health care organizations to join us and add more important voices to this effort so that all families can be healthy, economically thriving and live fulfilling lives.

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NOTES

1. Healthcare Anchor Network, www.healthcareanchor.network/.
2. "Homeowner Stories," Maggie Walker Community Land Trust, https://maggiewalkerclt.org/newsroom/homeowner-stories/?mc_cid=a8b904b837&mc_eid=9f7e2e4412.
3. "A Call to Invest in Our Neighborhoods," ACTION Campaign, <http://rentalhousingaction.org/>. See also Housing and Urban Development www.hud.gov.
4. "Housing for Health Policy Day Draws Attention to the Need for Stable, Affordable Housing," Healthcare Anchor Network, March 1, 2019, <https://healthcareanchor.network/2019/03/housing-for-health-policy-day-draws-attention-to-the-need-for-stable-affordable-housing/>.
5. Megan Brennan, *Gallup*, "Nurses Again Outpace Other Professions for Honesty, Ethics," December 20, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/245597/nurses-again-outpace-professions-honesty-ethics.aspx>.
6. "Hospitals and Health Systems: Significant Employers Making a Difference in Their Communities," Healthcare Anchor Network, December 2019, <https://healthcareanchor.network/2020/01/the-health-sector-and-the-healthcare-anchor-network-employer-maps/>.

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