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CMHA announces hiring of new Chief Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer, first in agency history

New executive’s role will include creation of a comprehensive diversity plan for CMHA that promotes an inclusive and multicultural environment while enhancing community engagement

Columbus, OH – The Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) announced today the selection of Sidney Childs as the agency’s new Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Officer, marking the first time in the agency’s 84-year history that such a position has been created.

Childs, who serves as the Associate Provost for Student Affairs/Dean of Students at Saginaw Valley State University (SVSU) in Michigan, will begin his new role for CMHA on Monday, Aug. 30. He will advise CMHA’s board of directors, executive team and staff on diversity and inclusion matters that require cross-functional analysis and research, including recruitment, retention, talent management, workforce planning, and employee and community engagement efforts.

“We are delighted Mr. Childs has decided to join our CMHA team,” said CMHA Board Chair Stanley E. Harris. “His skill set, core values, experience, knowledge and lessons learned throughout his career are uniquely suited to mesh well with the opportunities and expectations specific to this new position.

“We will look to Mr. Childs to help us ensure diversity, equity and inclusion are valued and deeply embedded in CMHA’s organizational culture and that he will prioritize creating a sense of belonging within our agency,” Harris said.

Diversity, equity and inclusiveness is a pillar of superior organizational performance, noted CMHA President and CEO Charles Hillman. The CMHA workforce demographic more than compares favorably with the diversity of Franklin County’s population: CMHA’s workforce is comprised of eight nationalities and is 60% female/40% male, 61% Black, 29.7% White and 9% other ethnicities; Franklin County’s gender and racial makeup, according to census data, is 51.2% female/48.8% male, 66.8% white, 23.8% African American, and 11.5% other ethnicities.

“CMHA recognizes the real benefit of inclusion as a management strategy is to successfully bring together diverse groups of ideas, identities and information to strengthen employee engagement and find solutions to difficult challenges within communities,” said Hillman.

“Under Mr. Childs’ leadership, we will emphasize now more than ever that all individuals are welcome at CMHA regardless of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex – including pregnancy, gender identity and sexual orientation – parental status, family medical history, genetic information, political affiliation and military service or non-merit-based factors.”

During his tenure at SVSU that began in 2016, Childs was tasked with leading and managing departments that provide programs and services for underrepresented and underserved students through
his work with federal TRIO programs, LGBT Program and Services and the Office of Multicultural Affairs.

While serving on the Saginaw Housing Commission, he advocated for policies that promote affordable housing communities where residents feel supported and safe and have an improved quality of life. Childs holds three degrees from Bowling Green State University (BGSU), including a Doctor of Education that he earned in 2013, a Master of Public Administration in 1993 and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in 1990. He held various administrative roles at BGSU from 1993 through 2016, including serving as BGSU’s Interim Vice President for Student Affairs before moving to SVSU.

“I am excited about this opportunity to build on CMHA’s strong history of commitment to promoting a diverse and inclusive workforce and clientele representative of individual and organizational cultures,” said Childs, who with his wife Beth have one daughter, Annae, who is a student at Saginaw Valley State University.

“Throughout my professional career, I have been intentional about cultivating a community environment where people feel welcomed and strive to create a more just and equitable world, one in which everyone sees themselves as valuable individuals and feel confident and competent in their own identities,” he said.

CMHA’s decision to create the Chief DE&I Officer position mirrors a recent push nationally by business, nonprofit and government leaders to promote more fair and equitable hiring practices and foster inclusive excellence in the workplace.

ZoomInfo’s analysis of 60 million professionals in its database found that approximately 2,250 roles with “diversity” or “inclusivity” in the title existed in 2019, compared with 876 in 2014. Until 2010, fewer than 500 companies had employees with “D&I” in their title, according to the report.

At the same time, while 85 of the nation’s top 100 corporations tracked by Bloomberg for corporate diversity have a chief diversity officer, representation of minorities within their workforce continues to lag. Even after the flood of new hires, only about 53% of S&P 500 firms have such a position or equivalent, up from 47% in 2018, Russell Reynolds research shows.

**About CMHA:** CMHA helps people access affordable housing through collaborative partnerships, promote neighborhood revitalization and assist residents in accessing needed social services. CMHA has more than doubled its portfolio of housing over the last five years, including over $200 million in investment in 2020. We own over 4,000 units of affordable housing and through our Housing Choice Voucher and Project Based Rental Assistance Programs provide rental assistance to more than 250,000 Ohio and Washington, D.C., residents. Half of the authority’s apartments are set aside as workforce housing for families earning 80% of the area median income.

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