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CLP<sup>HA</sup>



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# ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO POSTSECONDARY SUCCESS

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Cross-Sector Collaborations to Improve  
Postsecondary Achievement  
for Students Served by Public Housing Authorities



A report by the *Housing Is*  
Initiative with support from  
The Kresge Foundation

Chicago Housing Authority student having a free professional headshot taken at Take Flight: Staying the Course, a January check-in event to support student retention.



## INTRODUCTION

**Public housing authorities (PHAs)**, which are funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), provide safe, stable subsidized rental housing and housing vouchers to 3.3 million households, including nearly 2.8 million children ages 0-17.

Though not required by statute, most PHAs provide support services to residents and offer programs that seek to increase employment opportunities, economic self-sufficiency, and overall health and well-being.

Over the last two decades, housing authorities have purposefully implemented programs in partnership with local experts outside of the housing industry to improve resident outcomes. A small vanguard of PHAs are now working alongside postsecondary education partners to increase educational attainment among public housing residents, as well as housing-insecure college students in their communities. Given low rates of postsecondary attainment among public housing residents and barriers to postsecondary success among low-income students more broadly, PHAs are approaching this work from two different angles.

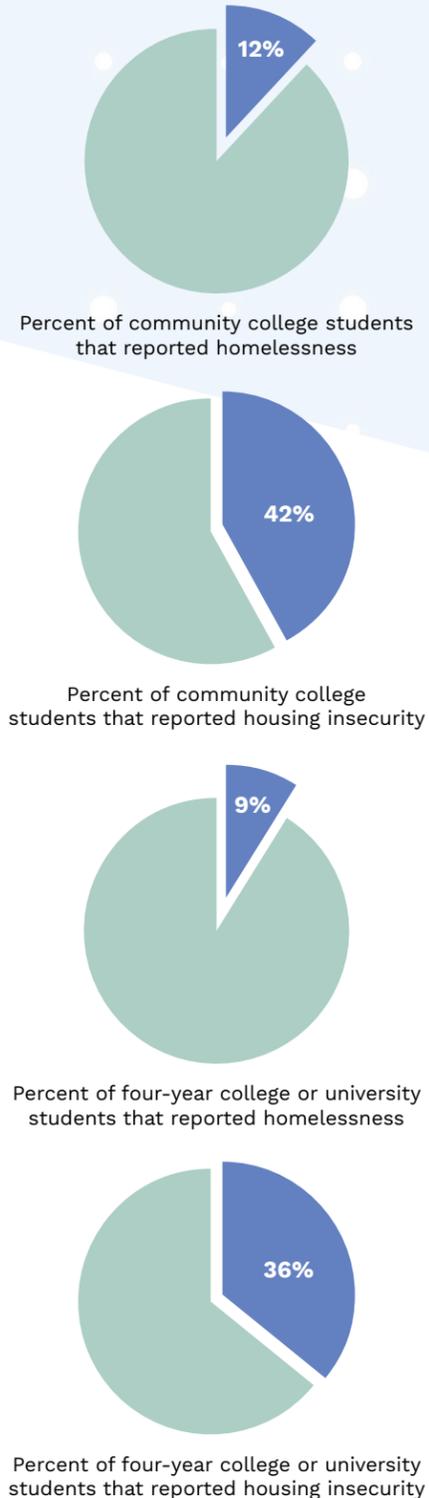
HUD data shows that among work-able residents of federally subsidized housing, one third have attended, but not completed college, 36 percent of heads of households have a high school degree or GED, and 23

percent have not completed high school.<sup>1</sup> We also know that low-income high school students are less likely to apply for, attend, and complete college than their middle- and high-income peers. In 2015, only 46 percent of students from low-income families enrolled in college immediately after graduation from high school, compared to 79 percent of high-income high school graduates.<sup>2</sup>

While cost is the biggest hurdle to college attendance and completion, low-income students are often forced to drop out or enroll part-time due to non-education related financial burdens and other unmet needs, including lack of stable housing.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, 12 percent of community college students reported experiencing homelessness at some point during the year, and 42 percent said they experienced housing insecurity—which includes the inability to pay for rent and utilities, or the need to move frequently.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, nine percent of students attending a four-year college or university were homeless in 2017, and 36 percent of university students experienced housing insecurity during that time.<sup>5</sup>

With support from the Kresge Foundation, the Council of Large Public Housing Authorities (CLPHA), a non-profit advocacy organization which represents 70 of the largest and most innovative PHAs from most of the nation’s major metropolitan areas, convened five pioneering public housing authorities and their postsecondary partners in Washington, D.C., in November 2018. This brief provides an overview of promising practices at the intersection of public housing providers and higher education shared during the convening. It includes 11 initial findings and a series of recommendations for policy makers, public housing authorities pursuing postsecondary partnerships, and philanthropic groups considering investments in cross-sector initiatives between housing and education organizations.

2017 HOMELESSNESS IN COLLEGE STUDENTS



SOURCE: Wisconsin HOPE Lab and #RealCollege

EDUCATION IS A PATHWAY OUT OF POVERTY

Educational achievement is a pathway out of poverty, and postsecondary success is a proven disruptor of the cycle of intergenerational poverty. Higher education levels are linked to better earnings and benefits, steadier employment, and more opportunities to climb the socioeconomic ladder. Children born to families in the lowest income brackets who earn a college degree have more upward mobility than those who do not.<sup>6</sup>

Failure to finish a four-year degree severely diminishes individual earning potential and opportunities for advancement. The median weekly earnings for a college dropout is \$400 less than a bachelor’s degree holder, and only \$60 more than a high school graduate’s.<sup>7</sup> Nationally, only 16 percent of low-income students will finish their undergraduate studies and earn a degree.<sup>8</sup>

While cost is the biggest hurdle to college attendance and completion, low-income students are often forced to drop out or enroll part-time due to non-education related financial burdens and other unmet needs, including lack of stable housing.

Low-income students are also less likely to seek out guidance or resources about applying for college or financial aid,<sup>9</sup> and once enrolled they are often unaware of available programs and community supports. Notably, during the 2011-12 academic year, one-third of students who did not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) were likely eligible to receive Pell Grants, whereas students from relatively affluent school districts who are more likely to have access to one-on-one application assistance complete the FAFSA at higher rates.<sup>10</sup>



Photo from Family Scholar House

Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer poses for a photograph with a Family Scholar House participant and FSH CEO Cathe Dykstra.

THE NEED FOR LOCAL INTERVENTIONS:

How Housers and Postsecondary Experts are Partnering to Address the Problem

Federal programs exist to increase access to postsecondary education for low-income students, but only one, Project SOAR, which was slated to sunset in April 2019, is targeted specifically at those who receive federal housing assistance. Project SOAR, which stands for Students + Opportunities + Achievements = Results, is a HUD demonstration program that provided grant funding to select PHAs to help families navigate the college application process.

While HUD does support economic self-sufficiency and mobility initiatives for people

## INTRODUCTION

served by PHAs through the Jobs Plus, Family Self-Sufficiency, and Family Unification programs, these efforts are primarily focused on achieving steady employment, better wages, and family stability, which may or may not include college access.

There are no federal requirements or incentives for public housing authorities to provide housing to homeless students seeking postsecondary degrees. For an overview of the federal policy landscape, see Appendix I of this brief.

With limited support at the federal level, public housing authority leaders who identify postsecondary achievement as a priority to improve resident outcomes have implemented local, placed-based interventions to meet the needs of the low-income students and prospective students they serve. In collaboration with postsecondary partners, some PHAs are supporting housing insecure students by dedicating housing vouchers or developing properties specifically for college students struggling to remain stably housed, while others are working to increase college access among their existing populations by providing scholarships and wraparound services.

PHAs across the country are becoming increasingly involved in postsecondary work, and five among them stand out as innovative leaders in this space: the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA), and Tacoma Housing Authority (THA).

With unique approaches driven by local needs and preferences, these PHAs are collaborating with community college and college access partners to ensure resident success in the classroom.

All five site partnerships are deeply rooted in the alignment of systems and resources that extend

beyond both the brick and mortar of housing, and the walls of the classroom. CHA and THA are partnering with local community colleges to provide financial support for residents and housing-insecure college students, HACLA is facilitating the college application and enrollment process among young residents, and CMHA and LMHA are following a dual generation approach to ensure young parents can graduate with a degree. For an overview of the five partnerships, see Appendix II of this brief.

## THE CONVENING

To explore the success and challenges of postsecondary partnerships at the five sites, the Kresge Foundation and CLPHA hosted a convening in November 2018 in Washington, D.C., for CHA, CMHA, HACLA, LMHA, and THA, and their nonprofit and community college partners from City Colleges of Chicago, One Million Degrees, Columbus State Community College, Southern California College Access Network, Family Scholar House, and Tacoma Community College.

Representatives from CLPHA, HUD, The Kresge Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, and site participants discussed their collaborations, exchanged lessons learned, and considered the tools needed to sustain and scale their partnerships over the long term.

Here you will find 11 initial learnings extrapolated from the convening that identify key elements of successful partnerships, and a series of recommendations to federal policy makers, public housing authorities, and philanthropists as they consider additional investments in postsecondary collaborations between public housing authorities and education partners.



Photo by Jason Geil/Chicago PhotoPress

A volunteer One Million Degrees coach and her scholar during a coaching session at Kennedy-King College.

## INITIAL FINDINGS

### 1. Housing Authorities and Postsecondary Institutions Turn to One Another for Cross-Sector Expertise

When housing providers and postsecondary institutions turn to cross-sector partners to fill their gaps in expertise, they are well positioned to tackle multi-faceted challenges facing low-income students. Housers and postsecondary providers are more efficient and effective when they play to their strengths while leveraging the know-how of partners.

A participant from a college access organization said that by working with the right housing partner, they are able to serve more families because they don't need to spend time becoming an expert in that sector.

Similarly, a community college partner explained

that they knew it was imperative to work with a housing provider once they identified housing instability as a nonacademic barrier to success, and the housing authority has been able to meet that need.

### 2. Data and Resource Sharing are Foundational to Partnerships

Data and resource sharing bolster partners' coordinated efforts. Despite potential challenges in the initial stages of implementation, participants saw data sharing as necessary for identifying common populations, reducing the burden on low-income students, and decreasing the duplication of activities.

Integrated data systems are particularly helpful in bringing partners together to develop strategies for coordinated service delivery. United

Way, for example, has worked with some cities to create data portals that give service providers access to client information, including household makeup and background. While some providers express concerns about privacy, clients are generally excited about the idea and willing to sign release forms for these projects.

In Los Angeles, the One Degree data portal, which was developed with support from the Kresge Foundation, connects individuals and families to health, education, legal and other services through a user-friendly interface.

Both types of databases eliminate barriers to postsecondary success by reducing the burden on low-income students to repeatedly share personal information and make their own connections between service providers and institutions.

Tools that help facilitate communication and understanding between sectors are very useful, and many participants agreed that data sharing was a good first step in developing their shared cross-sector goals.

All participants saw a continued role for philanthropy in supporting data sharing efforts, particularly in the funding and development of integrated data portals.

### 3. Building Staff Capacity Helps to Sustain and Scale Programs

Hiring new staff at a PHA can be costly; however, participants agree that it is critical to sustaining and scaling robust programs. By hiring a dedicated staff person, investing in staff trainings, and building institutional knowledge and commitment to postsecondary success, these programs are generally more successful. Housing authorities are continuing to think creatively about how to attract—and keep—exceptional staff despite challenges, including an aging workforce.



A Louisville Family Scholar House graduate poses for a photo with her daughter.

Photo from Family Scholar House

One PHA executive, now focused on staff recruitment, said that a large proportion of the staff will be retiring in the next five to seven years, which threatens a significant loss of institutional knowledge.

Another PHA is experimenting with partnerships to grow caseworker capacity by working with nearby schools of social work to develop training opportunities for students who want to work with residents of public housing. This creates a win-win situation, he said. The housing authority

is able to provide more services for residents while social work students gain experience working in the field.

### 4. Mindset-Shifts Among Staff in Both Sectors Are Needed for Partnership Building and Program Success

Re-orienting staff towards new ideas, projects, and goals is central to housing authorities and their partners' postsecondary efforts. Staff may operate under a perception of scarcity—the sense that limited resources hinder an organization's ability to perform non-essential activities—which in turn affects their willingness to support a new project or way of doing things. Fostering a cultural shift among staff at all levels is an important component of partnership building and development.

As housing authorities connect with outside organizations involved in the postsecondary pipeline, they are also working to break down silos. One PHA executive said they are very intentional about the cross-trainings they provide to staff in order to encourage members of various departments to think beyond their core work responsibilities.

### 5. Engaged Leadership at PHAs and Postsecondary Institutions is Critical to Strong Partnerships and Programs

Buy-in from organizational leadership is important for ensuring the longevity of cross-sector partnerships. In some cases, entrenched leadership can be an obstacle to progress particularly in historically siloed organizations.

Leaders that value innovative activities are more likely to support building staff capacity and other efforts to sustain programs. During a breakout session, several participants emphasized that next generation PHA leaders should be exposed to the importance of cross-sector collaborations so that they will be able to carry on this work when they rise to executive level positions.

### 6. Inconsistency of Resources are Barriers to Program Expansion

For PHAs, inconsistent funding streams are a primary barrier to the provision of any services that are not required or fully funded by HUD. Many sites are using a combination of private and public dollars to fund their initiatives, leveraging partnerships at the national, state, and local levels to stay afloat.

Though not explicitly defined during the convening, participants acknowledged the challenge of budgeting for their postsecondary programs given the unpredictable nature of federal funding for public housing, and the constraints on how those funds may be used. Housing authorities receive operating and capital subsidies from HUD to cover ongoing operating and capital costs. They use these funds for general property management, program compliance, and, in many cases, to provide supportive services to residents. But, funding for operating and capital subsidies is subject to the annual appropriations process for the federal budget, and for the past several decades funding for public housing has been on a steady and precipitous decline.

In the case of one pair of community college and PHA partners, when they realized their limited resources were not enough to help 25 students obtain affordable housing despite having a voucher, they engaged a grant writer to look for opportunities to help students with the initial costs of accessing housing, including first and last month's rent, and a security deposit. They have also leveraged additional state resources for their work with the Second Chance Pell Grant pilot program.

Another PHA uses its Project SOAR grant to leverage support for private dollars, and engages its nonprofit affiliate to fundraise for their postsecondary programs.

Still some partnerships struggle because of a general unwillingness by state and local officials

to make investments in affordable housing. One PHA is exploring innovative revenue sources to sustain their postsecondary programs, which has the benefit of flexibility and freedom from federal funding restrictions.

Residents are also wary of inconsistent funding and how it impacts program continuity. As one college access partner noted, they have had to work hard to prove that their program is here to stay. They have also worked closely with their PHA partner to build community support for their postsecondary initiative. Yet, even with strong stakeholder support, it is unclear how the program will be funded once the current federal grant ends.

Despite resident, leadership, and community buy-in, a lack of flexible funding to implement, sustain, and scale postsecondary programs may stall efforts and deter replication at other sites.

## 7. Statutory and Regulatory Flexibility is a Platform for Innovative Programs

The Moving to Work Demonstration Program (MTW) provides PHAs greater autonomy to design and implement innovative programs that improve cost effectiveness, advance employment and self-sufficiency, and expand housing options for residents.<sup>11</sup> The MTW designation currently exempts 39 PHAs from certain Public Housing and Voucher Program rules, creating new possibilities for resident services such as hiring new staff dedicated to education initiatives.<sup>12</sup>

While MTW status is not needed to engage in this work, many agencies utilize the program's flexibility to make educational advancement a top priority. Sites have used MTW status to identify eligible households for relevant programs, expedite unit placements for people who meet specific criteria, and fund programs.

Non-MTW PHAs that feel hamstrung by the statutory funding restrictions, must work creatively to sustain their programs. One PHA shared that the lack of MTW flexibility is a

Despite resident, leadership, and community buy-in, a lack of flexible funding to implement, sustain, and scale postsecondary program may stall efforts and deter replication at other sites.

significant barrier to their work. Although they have found ways to invest in MTW-like initiatives, the housing authority has limited funds for program expansion and evaluation.

## 8. Racial Equity and Resident Buy-In are Critical Lenses Through Which to Approach the Work

Racial equity, which can be applied to all aspects of postsecondary efforts, should be foundational to partnerships between PHAs, community colleges, and college access organizations. It is particularly important to see racial equity reflected in organizational staff and leadership.

College access and community college partners emphasized the importance of incorporating a racial equity lens when thinking about the leadership pipeline, and that leaders should

source solutions from the communities most impacted.

Engaging residents in the planning and development of programs is another way to operationalize a commitment to equity and inclusion. Seeking input from the community may also increase interest, enthusiasm, and participation among communities served.

## 9. Philanthropy Allows Housing Authorities to Take Risks

By providing grant funding for staffing, gap financing, and program evaluations, philanthropy helps PHAs experiment with new partnerships and innovations that they would otherwise be unable to attempt because of limited federal funds.

Philanthropy can be particularly helpful in funding the initial phases of new projects, supporting capacity building, and developing integrated data systems.

For one partnership, philanthropy enabled the housing authority to hire its first education staff person, a position that could not have been created or funded without a supportive grant partner. "We would not have been able to afford this staffer without funding from philanthropy," said a PHA executive. "Nor would we have felt comfortable taking a risk on a new project like this."

Convening participants shared additional examples of philanthropy's role in their successful cross-sector collaborations including:

- Enabling a PHA to rethink its internal structure and the way it may align itself with larger county-wide efforts. With funding and guidance from philanthropy, they became involved in their Mayor's homelessness efforts, as well as their philanthropic network.
- Catalyzing a PHA's larger strategic

investments, particularly in the area of permanent supportive housing. Building off of a federal Choice Neighborhoods Initiative grant they had already received, the PHA was also able to receive funding from local foundations.

- Providing much needed gap financing and housing payments for 60,000 households.
- Building capacity for a more proactive approach to the postsecondary initiative by funding full-time staff.

## 10. Evaluations Are Important Components of Cross-Sector Initiatives

PHAs and their partners recognize the importance of program evaluations. Although they are not always able to secure funding to pay for evaluations, all agree that cross-sector postsecondary initiatives should be data-driven and that outcomes should be measured.

In discussions about what helps postsecondary efforts to be successful, participants cited financial support for program evaluations as critical for sustaining, scaling, and replicating programs.

## 11. Partners Benefit from Matchmaking by Conveners

Public agencies and organizations at the crossroads of housing and postsecondary education play important roles as facilitators and conveners. PHAs and their partners benefit from being brought together by state collaboratives, community foundations, and national membership organizations like CLPHA that have experience cultivating cross-sector partnerships. In other communities, PHAs, community college presidents and boards, public agencies, or social service providers help to convene relevant parties and establish partnerships. Conveners are needed to initiate conversations and help partners take the first step towards working together.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION

### 1. Encourage Interagency Collaboration to Support Local Cross-Sector Partnerships

Because of its position at the intersection of many service delivery systems, HUD should develop and strengthen partnerships with other federal agencies like the Department of Education, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Health and Human Services. HUD can also help to facilitate interagency relationships at the state level between Departments of Corrections and Departments of Family and Protective Services. Such relationships will streamline postsecondary education initiatives to make them more effective and efficient and to better serve low-income individuals. The federal administration should prioritize and develop a strategy

to build a national framework for cross-sector collaboration, data sharing, and policy reform; convene a task force and dedicate resources to create an infrastructure for integrated data systems; appoint a special assistant or representative from appropriate federal agencies to meet regularly and ensure collaboration; and, support legislation that will incentivize partnerships across agency programs.

### 2. Endorse Data Sharing Templates Between Housing Authorities and Cross-Sector Partners

HUD should approve templates that provide safe harbors for housing authorities to pursue data sharing with partner organizations. This will enable PHAs to continue pursuing cross-sector work with greater ease and encourage others to start new initiatives. By addressing barriers to data sharing at the federal level, HUD can create and support new opportunities for partnership at the local level.



Minds Matter of Los Angeles, in partnership with the Los Angeles Dodgers Foundation, the Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti and in collaboration with Southern California College Access Network, hosted a College Signing Day to celebrate 100 first-generation students who are going to college.

# RECOMMENDATIONS » Federal Government

### 3. Reform HUD Rules That Are Inconsistent with the Needs Of and Realities Facing Low-Income Students

Legislation enacted to offset abuses of housing assistance programs is inadvertently stymying efforts for low-income students to be successful. Under current HUD rules, only dependent full-time students are given consideration for rent protections, a description most part-time college students living in public housing do not meet. Therefore, income earned through part-time employment—a fairly common scenario for low-income students—currently counts as income that could raise the rent owed for an assisted unit.

HUD does not consider financial assistance from an institution of higher learning (athletic and academic scholarships or financial aid) as income and does not factor these funds into rent calculations; however, loans, aid for books or other educational expenses, and student income can contribute to rent increases.

These rules and regulations are inconsistent with the realities facing low-income students, who often juggle at least a part-time job while they are in school and should thus be reviewed and reformed. HUD should expand current rental determination policies to include considerations for nontraditional adult students and part-time students, to address the significant investment families make in order to enroll in college and to ensure that they are able to continue pursuing postsecondary education while working—all without risk of losing much-needed housing benefits.

### 4. Expand and Improve Research and Data Collection at the Intersection of Housing and Postsecondary Education

HUD should continue to engage in research projects related to the intersection of housing and education. The data match agreement between HUD and the Department of Education has created a knowledge base of residents in

Legislation enacted to offset abuses of housing assistance programs is inadvertently stymying efforts for low-income students to be successful.

assisted households who have submitted a FAFSA and received financial aid. HUD's FAFSA data collection should be expanded to learn why an application was not completed and to determine whether an individual who received FAFSA matriculated, persisted, and graduated in order to develop interventions with a greater impact on outcomes. HUD should replicate this work for other facets of housing and education, such as student debt.

### 5. Learn from MTW Successes and Explore Alternative Statutory and Regulatory Flexibilities

MTW and the Rental Demonstration Program (RAD) are programs that provide PHAs with the operational flexibility they need to better serve residents and voucher holders. MTW in particular should be used as a means to facilitate learning among PHAs—those who would be new to postsecondary efforts or MTW designation—to understand and learn how flexibilities could be

scaled up and available to all PHAs. HUD should explore other flexibilities in addition to MTW to help PHAs increase postsecondary opportunities. The RAD program is another federal vehicle that could support cross-sector partnerships that deliver higher education outcomes. RAD can be used to improve and expand the quality of housing for those seeking to advance their postsecondary options.

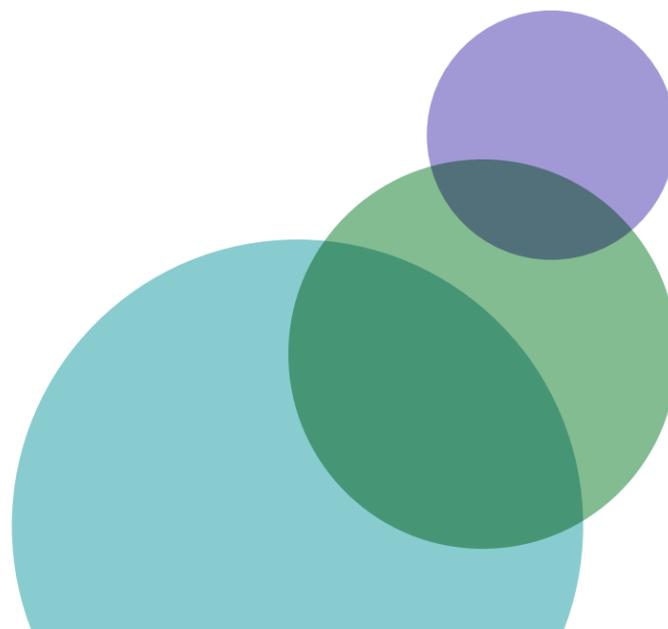
### 6. Continue to Invest in Project SOAR and Other Federal Initiatives That Increase Postsecondary Access for Low-Income Students

Federal programs should support PHAs' postsecondary efforts in local communities. Project SOAR should be re-funded and expanded to give other housing authority sites the opportunity to engage in this work. In addition to funding, HUD should hire or allocate dedicated staff for this initiative. This will help to ensure that the learnings from the first cohort—as well as HUD's evaluation of the program—are incorporated into subsequent phases of the program. Project SOAR may also be considered a jumping-off point for future programs funded by other agencies.

### 7. Model and Promote Racial Equity Through Legislative Initiatives and Priorities

The federal government should take a more outspoken stance on the importance of racial equity in affordable housing and postsecondary work. Whether through legislation, congressional hearings, or task forces, the federal government should support and facilitate efforts to diversify industry leadership and ensure equity is foundational to serving low-income students. As Chairwoman of the House Financial Services Committee, Congresswoman Maxine Waters has demonstrated a commitment to equity with the creation of the Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion. Although this subcommittee deals primarily with the financial services sector, it is a good example of how the legislative branch can engage an equity lens.

Whether through legislation, congressional hearings, or task forces, the federal government should support and facilitate efforts to diversify industry leadership and ensure equity is foundational to serving low-income students.



### PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES PURSUING POSTSECONDARY COLLABORATIONS

#### 1. Establish Joint Goals with Postsecondary Partners

PHAs and postsecondary organizations and institutions should work together to identify overlapping populations—a good way of helping potential partners to see the utility of working together. In addition to developing joint goals for the partnership, PHAs and postsecondary organizations should address how each organization's assets can support goals.

#### 2. Share Data with Relevant Parties

Data sharing is critical for program development and evaluation to help determine what interventions work and therefore where to invest current and future resources. Data sharing can be used to leverage existing partnerships and create new ones because it can show that goals are being accomplished.

CLPHA has created [two data sharing agreement templates](#) for communities to use as a tool to assist in data sharing, as well as a data sharing agreement for some specific housing authorities and a managed care organization.

#### 3. Build Internal Knowledge and Capacity to Work with Cross-Sector Partners

In order to sustain and effectively engage in partnership, communication is key to identify and implement joint goals. Partners must understand the respective terminology and goals of other sectors in order to be successful in working together.

As partnerships mature, it has made sense for organizations to hire dedicated staff to ensure their benefits can be fully realized. Sometimes, one partner will hire an employee from another sector, which can help strengthen bonds between the organizations and ensure their internal knowledge is complementary.

#### 4. Incorporate a Dual-Generation Approach That Addresses the Needs of the Whole Family

Two-generation, or dual-generation, initiatives, which work to address the needs of both parents and children, are examples of effective, collaborative efforts. A dual-generation approach is particularly applicable to cross-sector postsecondary efforts given that a large number of low-income community college students are also parents.

These strategies strive to simultaneously improve outcomes for low-income children and their parents through the provision of job training, postsecondary education, strengthening parenting capacity and/or economic supports for parents, and high-quality early care and education opportunities for their children. Engaging the whole family unit at the outset of the process and establishing the value of participation can solidify the support needed for the student to thrive.

#### 5. Cultivate New Leaders Who Are Committed to Cross-Sector Collaboration

While collective effort is at the core of all partnerships, they often require strong leadership to get off the ground and remain aloft. Whether it is institutionalizing the efforts or getting commitment from a board, once communities have done the difficult work to create a partnership and initiatives to achieve change, it is critical they make sure their work is durable enough to survive staff changes and the passage of time. Achieving systemic impact requires sustainable relationships at every level, from front-line service providers to executive directors.

#### 6. Actively Incorporate a Racial Equity Lens into Programs, Staffing, and Leadership

PHAs should incorporate a commitment to racial equity in their mission, as well as find ways to operationalize this commitment in their programs. Staff at all levels of the PHA should reflect a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The internal leadership pipeline should similarly

reflect a diversity of age, race, and gender. Resident buy-in and input from the community play an important role in holding organizations accountable and should be factored into decision-making and program design.

**7. Prioritize Evaluation When and Where Possible**

In order to measure effectiveness, initiatives should include research components to evaluate efforts. Because housing authorities do not always have the extra funding to evaluate their programs, evaluations should be built-in and funded at the onset. Otherwise, PHAs should seek out alternative funding streams to do this work.

**PHILANTHROPY**

**1. Fund Evaluations and Start-Up Costs**

Without rigorous data to support existing models, housing authorities and their partners are stymied in their efforts to engage in evidence-based strategies. HUD’s forthcoming evaluation of Project SOAR will help inform local efforts, yet more robust evaluations are needed to establish that these innovative program models, launched through cross-sector partnerships, produce demonstrable outcomes. Philanthropy should help fund program evaluations and implementation costs. Other meaningful activities such as leadership development and partnership capacity building require sustained financial investments and ongoing support to succeed.

**2. Help Housing Authorities and Other Organizations Secure the Availability and Affordability of Housing**

Philanthropy has already proven itself a helpful partner in securing and constructing housing through grants and social investments. As more PHAs look to secure units for low-income students in areas with rising rents, philanthropy can provide the capital needed for PHAs to scale programs. Foundations should continue to support cross-

sector postsecondary efforts through rent buy-downs and property acquisitions.

**3. Use National Platforms to Promote the Intersection of Education and Housing**

Large foundations should use their national platform to support organizations working in this space, as well as to promote housing-postsecondary partnerships to improve life outcomes for low-income students. Given its standing in the social sector, philanthropy should communicate the advantages of working across sectors and encourage a culture of collaboration.

**4. Support Efforts to Diversify Leadership and Incorporate Equity Lenses**

Philanthropy should support PHAs’ efforts to adopt and operationalize a racial equity lens to best serve HUD-assisted households. Foundations can also support initiatives to diversify PHAs’ leadership pipelines and prioritize funding for organizations that incorporate resident voices in meaningful ways.

**CONCLUSION**

Our initial findings show that despite a lack of federal guidance and support, cross-sector collaborations at the local level can provide holistic support to current and prospective postsecondary students who are served by public housing authorities as residents or voucher holders. But additional investments are needed to scale, replicate, and fully evaluate the programs presented by CHA, CMHA, HACLA, LMHA, and THA, who, along with their postsecondary partners are redefining the traditional role of public housing in their respective communities.

By leveraging housing dollars with education supports, and partnering with other value-driven organizations, these five sites have made a commitment to bettering the lives of their residents and addressing the root causes of intergenerational poverty and structural inequality.



Emerging evidence suggests that targeted interventions help low-income individuals achieve postsecondary success and deliver other societal benefits:

- In Tacoma, college students receiving housing supports from the Tacoma Housing Authority graduate at a rate that is twice that of Tacoma Community College’s general population.
- Chicago Housing Authority’s educational programs yielded a total of 1,253 certificates and associate degrees awarded to residents since 2010.<sup>13</sup>
- By helping single-parent families transition to self-sufficiency, the Family Scholar House program in Louisville helps to save more than \$50,000 in government subsidies per household served.<sup>14</sup>

The overall economic benefits of increasing the number of working people with bachelors’ degrees should provide compelling budget justification for policy makers and elected officials. Compared to wage earners with only a high school degree, wage earners with a bachelor’s degree contribute \$278,000 more to their local economy, \$44,000 more in state and local taxes over their lifetime, and \$771 more in annual individual charitable giving.<sup>15</sup> Individuals with higher education levels are less likely to rely on public assistance, including federally subsidized housing where only 8 percent of work-able households had a bachelor’s degree or higher in 2015.<sup>16</sup>

Our recommendations to policy makers, philanthropy, and other PHAs considering cross-sector collaborations will facilitate more effective partnerships to eliminate barriers to postsecondary success for low-income students served by public housing authorities.

# FEDERAL POLICY EFFORTS

to Support Postsecondary Achievement for Households Served by Public Housing Authorities

A stated goal of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Office of Public and Indian Housing is to create opportunities for residents' self-sufficiency and economic independence, which it strives to achieve through various programs and grants to public housing authorities.

Three programs that are designed to increase income and financial stability—the Jobs Plus, Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), and Family Unification (FUP) programs—promote educational advancement as a means to greater economic mobility, but only one HUD program, Project SOAR, which is slated to sunset in April 2019, is dedicated to postsecondary access. An additional program that grants certain regulatory flexibilities to selected PHAs, the Moving to Work (MTW) demonstration, enables participants to dedicate more resources to postsecondary achievement if they choose to do so.

It is important to note the finite reach of these programs, which serve only a small number of the over 3,000 PHAs and, with the exception of MTW, are time-limited. To varying degrees, they emphasize general education and training, which may include early childhood, K-12, and pre-collegiate education, rather than postsecondary education.

With the exception of the five localities



**A volunteer One Million Degrees coach works with a scholar to review the scholar's resume during an OMD coaching session at Kennedy-King College.**

profiled, a more detailed assessment of the education initiatives supported by these federal programs—as well as those administered by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)—was beyond the scope of this brief.

Following are descriptions of the five HUD programs that directly and indirectly promote postsecondary achievement and how they are used by the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA), Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA), and Tacoma Housing Authority (THA).

## COLLEGE APPLICATIONS AND FAFSA SUPPORT: PROJECT SOAR

Students + Opportunities + Achievements = Results (**Project SOAR**) is a HUD demonstration program that provides grant funding to select PHAs to help young residents and their parents navigate the college application process. Also known as ROSS for Education, Project Soar is a subset of HUD's Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency (ROSS) Program, which funds programs such as Family Self-Sufficiency and service coordinator positions. First funded in HUD's FY16 budget as a two-year program, Project SOAR distributed \$2.5 million across nine PHAs, including CHA and HACLA; both received the maximum of \$452,000 in Project SOAR funds to employ three education navigators.<sup>17</sup>

Project SOAR's main goal is to decrease the "college attendance gap" by increasing completion rates of the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA), the first step in determining eligibility for federal student aid.<sup>18</sup> An education navigator—hired by a PHA—is appointed to support students ages 15-20 through the application process, and assist in postsecondary planning for 2- and 4-year colleges and career and technical programs.

The education navigator connects students to available opportunities and supports related to college preparation and affordability provided by the Department of Education and other school-specific aid.<sup>19</sup> The education navigator also helps to increase financial literacy and college readiness. Another goal of the program is to reduce "summer melt," or failure to enroll in college after acceptance, which education navigators address by helping residents complete paperwork and prepare for classes over the summer.<sup>20</sup>

Although grantees are permitted to partner with external service providers as part of Project SOAR, PHAs serve as primary administrators of the

CHA and HACLA both received the maximum of **\$452,000** in Project SOAR funds to employ three education navigators.

program.<sup>21</sup> The four smallest PHA grantees provide Project SOAR services to all eligible residents, while the five larger grantees are responsible for tracking the progress of Project SOAR students alongside a resident control group that does not receive supports.<sup>22</sup> These findings will contribute to a growing body of research aimed at increasing college attendance among low-income students by "combining FAFSA awareness with assistance in completing the FAFSA."<sup>23</sup>

Project SOAR was designed as a 24-month project with a current end date of April 2019.<sup>24</sup> Initial funding for the program was allocated from the ROSS Service Coordinator Program and will not be continued.<sup>25</sup> The Office of Evaluation Sciences is working with both HUD and ED to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, the results of which HUD says will be published by the end of 2019.<sup>26</sup>

Photo by Jason Geil/Chicago PhotoPress

## SELF-SUFFICIENCY AND LONG-TERM STABILITY: JOBS PLUS, FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY, AND THE FAMILY UNIFICATION PROGRAM

The **Jobs Plus Program** is a competitive place-based initiative aimed at developing programs for residents to “increase earnings and advance employment outcomes through work readiness, employer linkages, job placement, education advancement, technology skills, and financial literacy.”<sup>27</sup> Jobs Plus seeks to address barriers to resident self-sufficiency by “saturating” access to educational programming and workforce development.<sup>28</sup> With financial incentives such as income disregard, which allows participants to keep their earned income for up to 48 months, residents are encouraged to take advantage of all program services.

Jointly developed by HUD, the Rockefeller Foundation, and MDRC in 1998, Jobs Plus has provided \$35 million in annual funding since 2016.<sup>29</sup> As one of nine PHAs to receive a 4-year Jobs Plus grant in 2015, CHA is partnering with Metropolitan Family Services to provide services to public housing residents in its Altgeld Gardens complex.<sup>30</sup>

HUD’s **Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS)** initiative is a 5-year program that works to increase resident income while reducing dependency on welfare programs. FSS was developed in 1990 and has since served over 36,000 households served by public housing across the country.<sup>31</sup> Families work with an FSS Program Coordinator on a personalized training and services plans and take part in financial literacy and planning courses.<sup>32</sup>

The family has an interest-bearing escrow account opened in their name, which they

CHA was one of nine PHAs to receive a 4-year Jobs Plus grant in 2015.

In FY16, all five PHAs featured received FSS grants ranging from **\$144,000 to \$797,000.**

### FAMILY BENEFITS OF FSS GRANTS



Financial literacy and planning courses



An interest-bearing escrow account set up in the family’s name



As families’ earnings increase, PHAs deposit increased rental payments into the escrow account



Services related to education, job training, and employment

may access for any purpose after successfully completing the program. As families’ earnings increase, PHAs deposit increased rental payments into their escrow accounts. FSS also provides services related to education, job training, and employment by organizing a Program Coordinating Committee to involve local service providers.<sup>33</sup>

In FY16 all five PHAs featured in the brief, CHA, CMHA, HACLA, LMHA, and THA, received FSS grants ranging from \$144,000 to \$797,000.<sup>34</sup>

The **Family Unification Program (FUP)** is a joint initiative run by HUD and HHS that serves youth aging out of foster care and children and families with connections to the child welfare system. FUP is funded through a competitive process and is administered at approximately 250 PHAs across the country.<sup>35</sup> The FUP program aims to lessen barriers to self-sufficiency and long-term stability for youth aging out of foster care by providing housing and counseling supports.

Public Child Welfare Agencies (PCWA) make referrals to local PHAs for youth aging out of foster care, children at risk of being removed from their families, and children who are in the process of reuniting with their families—all of whom are placed on Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) waiting lists. In addition to receiving housing assistance for up to 36 months, youth aging out of foster care receive supportive services provided by PCWA as part of the FUP program.<sup>36</sup>

CHA, HACLA, and THA currently administer 600, 200, and 50 FUP vouchers, respectively.<sup>37</sup> In FY15, Congress introduced a FUP Youth and Family Self-Sufficiency Program Demonstration in which FUP-assisted youth were given access to the FSS program.<sup>38</sup> As part of the program, participating youth receive rental assistance for the duration of their participation in FSS.<sup>39</sup> CHA was one of the first 50 PHAs selected to participate in the demonstration.<sup>40</sup>

## USING REGULATORY FLEXIBILITY FOR LOCAL INNOVATION: MOVING TO WORK

An important tool that facilitates postsecondary efforts is the **Moving to Work Demonstration Program (MTW)**, which provides PHAs greater autonomy to design and implement innovative programs that improve cost effectiveness, advance employment and self-sufficiency, and expand housing options for residents.<sup>41</sup> The MTW designation currently exempts 39 PHAs from certain Public Housing and Voucher Program rules, creating new possibilities for resident services such as hiring new staff dedicated to education initiatives.<sup>42</sup> While MTW status is not needed to engage in this work, many agencies utilize the program's flexibility to make educational advancement a top priority.

MTW agencies also engage in research efforts to evaluate the success of their MTW initiatives. A number of MTW agencies work with local universities to measure the efficacy of the changes they make under the program, such as: mobility programs to increase housing choice; initiatives to improve economic self-sufficiency and work-related opportunities; programs to improve educational and health related outcomes; new partnerships with local community organizations; and service-enriched housing for homeless families or other special populations.

In 2015, the Consolidated Appropriations Act directed HUD to expand MTW to include an additional 100 agencies by 2022. The expansion includes a research and evaluation component. PHAs will be selected by research cohorts, and each cohort will be directed to implement and evaluate a specific policy change in the areas of cost effectiveness, self-sufficiency, and housing choice. The expansion of the program will likely create new opportunities for interested housing authorities to engage in initiatives that extend beyond the confines of housing.

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The Moving to Work Demonstration Program provides PHAs greater autonomy to design and implement innovative programs that improve cost effectiveness, advance employment and self-sufficiency, and expand housing options for residents.

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## APPENDIX II:

# PROFILES OF CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATIONS

Between Public Housing Authorities and Postsecondary Partners: Chicago, Columbus, Los Angeles, Louisville, and Tacoma

While a PHA's main mission is to safely house residents, more and more PHAs believe that it is also their mission to improve life outcomes, both for moral and economic reasons, and to address intergenerational poverty. The programs described below may be more promising than proven, however; several evaluations are currently underway. In considering the initiatives alongside one another, we may gain better insight into the strategies, challenges, and outcomes

involved in serving HUD-assisted households. The community profiles included below outline the roles CHA, CMHA, HACLA, LMHA, THA, and their respective partners play in facilitating postsecondary programs for residents. A description of the services provided, as well as information on challenges, program evaluations, and future plans follow initial profiles on each partner.

Third-year One Million Degrees Scholars in Chicago participate in a workshop on giving and receiving feedback.

Photo by Jason Geil/Chicago PhotoPress



# CHICAGO

## CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY, CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO FOUNDATION, AND ONE MILLION DEGREES

**Chicago Housing Authority (CHA)** offers two grant aid programs for residents who are seniors in high school, college students continuing their education, and adults returning to school. The first program, the **CHA Scholarship Program**, provides over 200 merit scholarships each year ranging from \$1,000 to \$2,500. The housing authority has found that scholarship awards more than double the rate of success among participants—defined as maintaining enrollment in college or graduating with a degree or certificate—as compared to before the scholarship was offered. In addition to working with CHA’s nonprofit affiliate Springboard to Success and other local colleges, CHA has developed partnerships with the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) and One Million Degrees (OMD) to advance its goals for resident success.

The second program, **Partners in Education** (described in more detail below), is specifically connected to **City Colleges of Chicago**, which is one of the largest community college systems in the country. With seven campuses across the city, CCC serves approximately 80,000 students each year.<sup>43</sup> CCC has been working with CHA through its Partners in Education program since the early 2000s.

**One Million Degrees** is a nonprofit that serves community college students in the Chicago area by providing personal, academic, professional, and financial support. OMD works to address the city’s high community college drop-out rate by supporting vulnerable students towards degree completion and career success. OMD currently engages over 700 students across the city’s community colleges and will expand its work with CHA in the fall of 2019.<sup>44</sup>



**One Million Degrees Senior Manager of College Partnerships Danielle McConnell leads a scholar development workshop.**

Photo by Jason Geil/Chicago PhotoPress

## CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY, CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO FOUNDATION, AND ONE MILLION DEGREES

### ↳ PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

CHA works with its partners both to increase college affordability and support students to maintain consistent enrollment through graduation. The **Partners in Education** program addresses the first of these goals: it pays for CHA residents to attend one of seven City Colleges of Chicago debt-free. After financial aid from CCC is applied, CHA steps in to cover any additional tuition costs as well as the cost of books, exam fees, and uniforms. CHA residents are eligible for Partners in Education support regardless of whether they are pursuing remedial courses, basic certificates, advanced certificates, or associate degree programs. The program also supports summer enrollment at CCC, which allows any CHA college student to continue coursework year-round.

While CHA scholarship recipients are generally traditional college students in their early twenties, participants in the Partners in Education program tend to be older with previous college experience;<sup>45</sup> sixty-four percent of these individuals are also heads-of-household.<sup>46</sup> The student demographics of each program reflect the housing authority’s commitment to encouraging postsecondary pursuits among residents of all ages.

CHA uses its MTW authority to support its scholarship and Partners in Education programs through Resident Services and **Section 3**, a HUD program that requires PHAs to foster local economic development, neighborhood economic improvement, and individual self-sufficiency.<sup>47</sup> To evaluate their work, CHA is using the National Student Clearinghouse to track enrollment patterns and graduation rates of its residents in the Partners in Education program.

In addition to providing scholarships, CHA hosts two “Take Flight” events each year for extra support during the college transition in August

Participants in the Partners in Education program tend to be older with previous college experience.

and second semester persistence in January. These events celebrate resident achievements and help to build a college network within CHA. August’s Take Flight provides residents with dorm supplies, and January’s event provides access to summer employment and professional internship opportunities, each with opportunities to connect former residents who are alumni to current CHA students. They also position CHA as a resource for students as they pursue their postsecondary goals, as well as offer opportunities for new students to transition to the Partners in Education program.

CHA has established supports to help families apply for financial aid and review financial aid awards; however, many students end up discontinuing their college enrollment due to unforeseen challenges and financial burdens. CHA works to address this challenge with the support of Project SOAR education navigators who walk families through aid management—including student loans and debt burdens—to ensure that degree completion is possible with the resources provided.

CHICAGO HOUSING AUTHORITY, CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO FOUNDATION, AND ONE MILLION DEGREES

## ↳ PROJECT SOAR AND ONE MILLION DEGREES

Individualized college counseling plays an important role in student success and the partnership between CHA, CCC, and OMD. CHA was awarded Project SOAR funds to provide individualized college counseling to youth ages 15-20 in select CHA properties. Project SOAR also enabled the housing authority to increase coordination and capacity with OMD and first-time college students attending CCC. In addition to this source of federal funding, a grant from The Kresge Foundation will help extend OMD's services to a larger group of CHA residents.

OMD supports CHA's second goal of supporting students through graduation. Students receive multifaceted supports through OMD, including intensive personalized support from a dedicated onsite program coordinator, individualized weekly tutoring as needed, monthly professional development, and regular coaching with a volunteer coach who is a professional or retired professional, ideally from the industry the student seeks to enter after graduation.

**A group of Chicago Housing Authority students at Take Flight, an August Trunk Party preparing first-time freshmen with dorm supplies.**



## COLUMBUS

### COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY AND COLUMBUS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Through partnerships with local universities and social service providers, the **Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA)** provides opportunities for residents to pursue postsecondary activities. One main effort is their **Scholar House**, which was established five years ago. This initiative is informally modeled after the Family Scholar House in Louisville (see further details in LMHA profile below) and hosts 38 units that serve parents enrolled full-time in an accredited postsecondary institution.

**Columbus State Community College (CSCC)** is a community college in Columbus, Ohio, with over 27,000 students. About 30 percent of their students are aged 20-24, with 14 percent between 25-29 years of age, and representation for students between 30-45 years of age, as well.<sup>48</sup> Nearly two-thirds of students receive

some kind of financial aid, with 55 percent receiving Pell grants, which are only available for students whose total family income is below \$50,000 annually, with most grants going toward those with family incomes below \$20,000.<sup>49</sup>

**Ohio State University (OSU)** is a highly selective public research university with a proven commitment to serving low-income and non-traditional students. In 1989, OSU created the ACCESS Collaborative Program which provides tutoring, academic success workshops, professional and leadership development, and mentoring for low-income single parent students.<sup>50</sup> The university seeks to increase retention rates among this population with the ACCESS Collaborative Program, as well as through contributions to, and partnership with, Scholar House.



Photo by Columbus State Community College

The groundbreaking for Scholar House in October 2015.

COLUMBUS METROPOLITAN HOUSING AUTHORITY AND COLUMBUS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

↳ SCHOLAR HOUSE

To address the barrier of housing stability that low-income students often face, CMHA, CSCC, Community Properties of Ohio (CPO), and Ohio Capital Corporation for Housing (OCCH) came together to conceptualize, fund, and build safe places for students to live so they can pursue postsecondary education. In order to prevent students from being displaced or unable to use their housing voucher in an increasingly tight rental market, CMHA decided to use project-based vouchers (PBVs) for participants in the program. When Scholar House was initially being built, CMHA worked with Community Properties of Ohio Development and OCCH to help fund the project.<sup>51</sup> CPO was particularly instrumental in the financing and development of Scholar House. Future phases of the program will be pursued solely by CMHA, and the housing authority has received 2018 Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to help support those efforts.

As a family and education-focused environment, Scholar House also offers extensive resident services and academic, social, and emotional support. In addition to their partnership with CSCC, CMHA also partners with Ohio State University's (OSU) ACCESS Collaborative Program.<sup>52</sup> The ACCESS Collaborative Program provides both academic and non-academic services for Scholar House participants, as well as low-income single parents who are enrolled at OSU.

Resident services staff of CPO supplement the ACCESS Collaborative Program's offerings with utility assistance programs, behavioral health services, early learning and childcare for participants' children, academic and family coaching, workforce development, and life skills and child development workshops. Family coaches serve as liaisons between residents and community resources and often make referrals for childcare, after-school programs, healthcare,

There have been 19 graduates with an average GPA of 3.0.

and wellness programs.<sup>53</sup> To increase success, the YMCA of Central Ohio provides on-site early childhood education in conjunction with Head Start for the children of these students as they pursue school full-time and often also maintain part-time employment. When graduating students transition out of the program over the course of six months, family coaches help to ensure a seamless move to independent living. Resident services staff also facilitate peer mentorship through a Resident Council, which works alongside family coaches and staff to develop activities for resident engagement.<sup>54</sup>

CMHA is developing a formal evaluation of Scholar House, but their collaboration with partners like CSCC are already showing promising gains. To date, there have been 19 graduates with a range of associate, bachelor, and masters' degrees and an average GPA of 3.0.

A key component of the next iteration of Scholar House involves serving youth aging out of foster care and reserving two units for resident advisors who will help create a peer supportive environment. As the lead developer on this project, CMHA hopes to receive addition support from Bridges, a state-run program for foster youth<sup>55</sup>

LOS ANGELES

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

The **Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA)** has been involved in postsecondary activities since the 1990s and continues to increase service offerings for residents through partnerships across the city. The housing authority now runs its postsecondary programming through a Strategic Partnership Unit and non-profit affiliate Kids Progress, Inc., which oversees its work with the Southern California College Access Network (SoCal CAN). HACLA remains committed to serving children and youth at every stage of development to ensure that students are ready and able to pursue postsecondary programs after high school.

**The Southern California College Access Network (SoCal CAN)** is an alliance of more than 70 organizations working together to promote a "college-going and completion culture" among low-income students in Southern California.<sup>56</sup> Each year, network members provide direct support to more than 150,000 students in the region. SoCal CAN creates the opportunity for organizations to share expertise, foster partnerships, leverage resources, and advocate for policies to ensure that more low-income students access and complete college. The network's five priority issues are: college affordability, college success and career readiness, family engagement, and the needs of undocumented students and young men of color.



Project SOAR students Ashley, Diana, and Thuy at graduation.

HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA COLLEGE ACCESS NETWORK

↳ PROJECT SOAR AND SOCAL CAN

With Project SOAR funds, HACLA partners with SoCal CAN to provide one-on-one college and financial aid navigation support for youth at five public housing sites: Ramona Gardens, William Mead, Nickerson Gardens, Avalon Gardens, and Gonzague Village. Three education navigators were hired to serve approximately 250 youth living in these developments.<sup>57</sup> SoCal CAN involved three of its member organizations to implement a drop-in advising model, provide financial aid advising, and promote family engagement at the five sites. In addition, all Project SOAR students in college are also enrolled in SoCal CAN's college persistence program Level Up, where they have an upperclassman who serves as a near-peer mentor to help ensure success.

HACLA collects information on the number of residents who apply and go to college as a metric of program effectiveness. The housing authority is also tracking students as they move through high school to ensure that they are well positioned to graduate and enroll in a postsecondary institution. Still, data capacity and sharing are major challenges for HACLA's education-related programs. Outreach for the Project SOAR program proved difficult given that HACLA could not provide names of residents to its partners. HACLA was able to share the unit numbers of eligible students; however, frequent transfers between units made it difficult to identify and contact potential participants. The housing authority and its partners are addressing this problem by developing workshops for families in identified units that provide information on Project SOAR along with preschool, school tutoring, adult

education, and workforce development services.

Funding for these programs is another challenge facing the housing authority given that Project SOAR will be ending shortly. HACLA and its partners hope to extend program services to all public housing developments and HCV program participants and are currently working to secure funding and support for this initiative.



The Cash for College – College and Career Convention event.

Based on their initial experience with Project SOAR, HACLA believes that employing a comprehensive social services strategy that includes family supportive services at the onset of the program would help garner support for participating

students. Students would also benefit from college access workshops focused on FAFSA and state financial aid opportunities through the California DREAM Act. Additionally, providing students with information about work study opportunities and paid internships would encourage college retention, particularly for students who provide financial support to siblings and other family members.

HACLA will encourage college retention by providing continued college access workshops that are incorporated into their existing Summer Youth Employment Program. HACLA will also continue to provide scholarships to students to help offset college expenses, and will commit to maintaining a roster of students and establish bi-annual check-ins with students to provide informal support.

With partner SoCAL CAN, HACLA continues to explore local support to sustain the program.

LOUISVILLE

LOUISVILLE METRO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND FAMILY SCHOLAR HOUSE

The **Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA)** began its work in the postsecondary arena by providing college scholarships to residents in the 1990s. The housing authority has invested \$1.2 million in scholarships over the past thirty years and continues to do so in addition to its work with Family Scholar House (FSH). As a Moving to Work agency, LMHA has included the FSH program in its MTW plan since their partnership began in 2008.

**Family Scholar House** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that takes a comprehensive two-generation approach to helping individuals and their families become self-sufficient and break the cycle of poverty. FSH now serves 247 families and 32 foster alumni in 279 apartments funded by the HCV program and tax credits. Participants in the program range from 18 to 49 years of age—40 percent of whom are between the ages of 18-24—with children ranging from 5 weeks to 21 years old.

Family Scholar House graduates pose for photos with their children.



Photos from Family Scholar House

LOUISVILLE METRO HOUSING AUTHORITY AND FAMILY SCHOLAR HOUSE

↳ FAMILY SCHOLAR HOUSE

Together, LMHA and FSH provide Housing Choice Vouchers and services such as childcare, academic advising, financial planning, and job preparation for participating families. The program is also supported by 13 area colleges and universities, eight employers with apprenticeship programs, area companies that provide job shadowing and mentorship, social service providers, faith-based organizations and communities, and elementary and secondary schools.

The FSH model is divided into three distinct phases. After going through an intake and orientation process, participants enter the pre-residential phase during which they gain access to FSH services. During the residential phase, participants receive housing and childcare at one of five FSH campuses. In addition to maintaining good standing at an accredited postsecondary institution, participants agree to take part in two family counseling and academic coaching sessions, attend a peer support workshop, perform four hours of community service, and deposit a minimum of \$10 in a savings account each month. Participants' children must also be in age-appropriate education as part of program compliance. The residential component of FSH is phased out with post-program support and guidance from staff. Participants transition out of FSH housing over the course of 90 days and continue receiving services according to individual needs. Participants also take part in workplace readiness training during this phase and leave the program with clear pathways to further their education and/or become employed.

Over the past 10 years, FSH has achieved promising success: "within 90 days of exit, 70 percent of graduates are off of most government subsidy programs."<sup>58</sup> Similarly, 81 percent of student parents enrolled in FSH's residential program exit to stable employment.<sup>59</sup> Many FSH

graduates go on to participate in the Graduate to Homeownership program. FSH has also explored participant success through the lens of economic benefit to the community.

The program is currently funded by two annual fundraisers, foundation and corporation grants, and private donations from groups and individuals. The FSH program relies heavily on local grants as it does not receive federal or state funding. To supplement LMHA contributions from the HCV program, FSH is developing its own LIHTC properties, which provide a modest yet stable revenue stream.

Much of the LMHA-FSH partnership is made possible by the housing authority's MTW flexibility. LMHA uses MTW authority to expedite the unit inspection process—a HUD requirement for all federally subsidized units—which allows families to move into residences more quickly. The housing authority also created a special MTW referral program for FSH eligible families, giving them priority on the HCV waiting list and expediting their wait time for a voucher.

LMHA and FSH's partnership continues to grow: in addition to developing new funding strategies to expand the existing program, the partnership has begun serving foster alumni—a term used to describe any youth who has spent time in the child welfare system after the age of 13. FSH began serving this vulnerable population with non-residential services in 2014 and now offers housing assistance at the Riverport Scholar House Campus to 32 participants. Although LMHA does not administer FUP vouchers, the housing authority has implemented supports that mirror those of the FUP program through the FSH model. Select foster alumni now receive housing assistance and supports while they pursue postsecondary education.

TACOMA

TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY AND TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The **Tacoma Housing Authority (THA)** houses or pays to house about 5,560 households in Tacoma, Washington, including "about 1 out of 7 Tacoma public school students and 1 out of 4.5 low income Tacoma public school students."<sup>60</sup> Its Education Project seeks ways to spend a housing dollar not just to house people, but also to help them and their children succeed in school and to help public schools and colleges educate low-income students. The housing authority's Education Project—which is made possible by MTW flexibilities—includes the THA College Housing Assistance Program, the THA College Savings Account Program, and THA's College Bound Scholarship Enrollment Project.

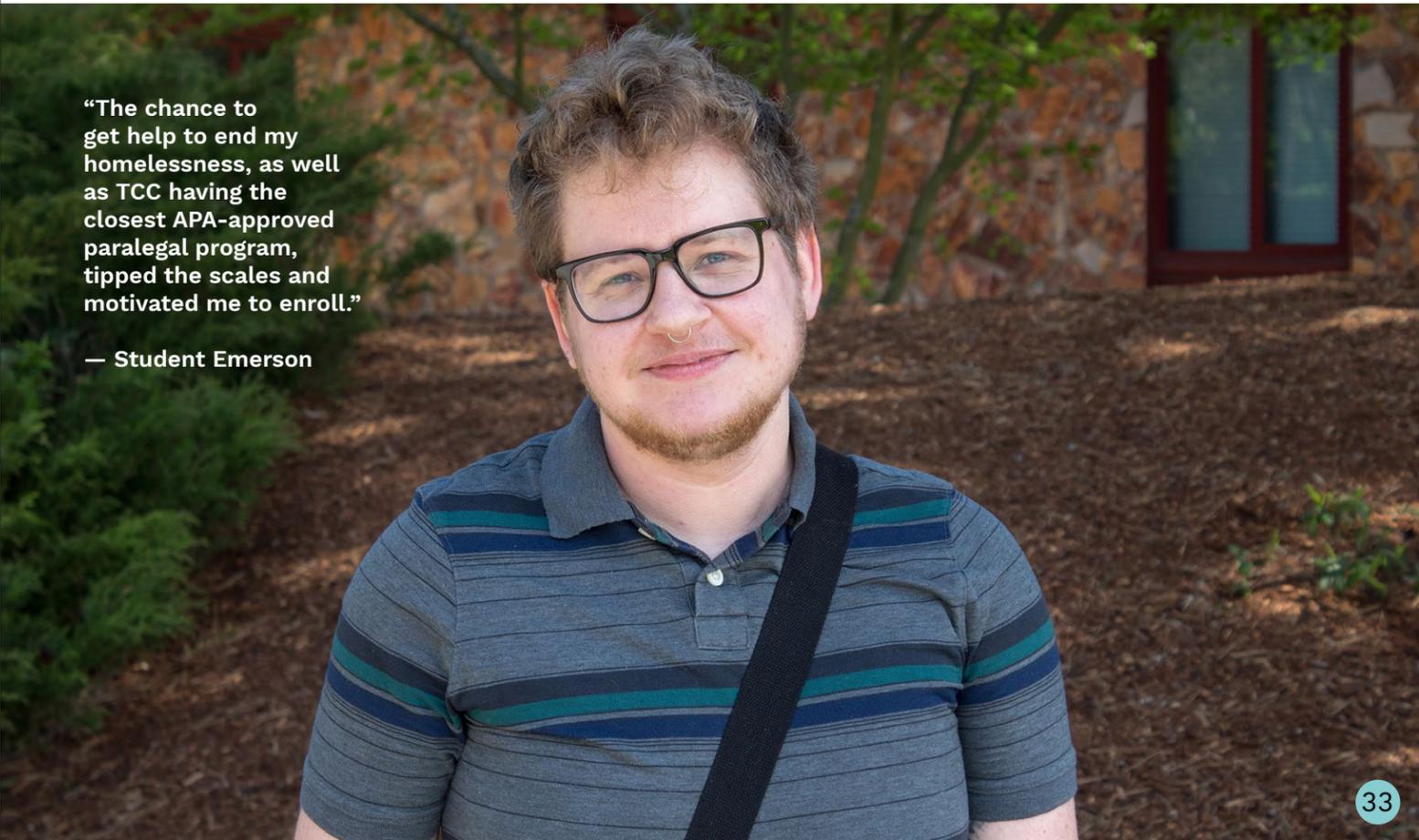
**Tacoma Community College (TCC)** is the largest college in the South Puget Sound Region. It

has approximately 14,000 enrolled students. In comparison with other area colleges, TCC students "are older, lower income, more likely to be parents, more likely to be working, and more likely to be their family's first to attend college."<sup>61</sup> In 2016, the University of Wisconsin's HOPE LAB surveyed TCC students as part of a national survey of community college students about their basic needs. That survey reported that within the 12 months prior to answering the survey, 69 percent of TCC students had experienced housing insecurity and 27 percent had experienced an instance of homelessness.<sup>62</sup> This urgent need, and its alarming scale, made a partnership with THA a natural fit and led to the creation of the **THA-TCC College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP)**.

"The chance to get help to end my homelessness, as well as TCC having the closest APA-approved paralegal program, tipped the scales and motivated me to enroll."

— Student Emerson

Photo by Tacoma Housing Authority



TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY AND  
TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

↳ COLLEGE HOUSING ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM (CHAP)

The THA-TCC College Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) began as a pilot in 2014. In the pilot, THA gave housing vouchers to 47 homeless TCC students, 70 percent of whom were parents. THA and TCC tracked them alongside a control group of 157 unassisted homeless TCC students who applied but did not fit inside the pilot. The initial results were very promising: TCC students who received rental assistance maintained higher GPAs and were nearly four times more likely to remain enrolled and/or graduate than those who were not assisted.<sup>63</sup>

THA's housing assistance lasts for three years or until graduation, whichever occurs first. Participating students must maintain a 2.0 GPA or higher, make adequate progress towards graduating with a degree, and partake in supportive services. TCC provides supportive services on campus in the form of navigators and "completion coaches" that offer academic counseling and planning.<sup>65</sup> Temple University, with a grant from the Kresge Foundation, will evaluate the CHAP by comparing outcomes of homeless and near-homeless students who received housing assistance with those who did not, as well as the general TCC population. Recent data shows that the CHAP is already producing promising results: according to TCC, 46% of participants exiting the CHAP program graduated with a degree, a graduation rate that is twice that of TCC's general population.

As CHAP expands, it faces new challenges arising from steeply rising rents in the TCC area. Like many gentrifying neighborhoods across the country, the area surrounding TCC's campus has become increasingly unaffordable—even for households with a housing voucher. THA has responded by purchasing apartment complexes in walking distance of the campus and contracting with the owner of another nearby apartment complex. THA gives the owner a lump sum subsidy to buy down rents to levels affordable for homeless or near-homeless TCC students.<sup>66</sup> THA has also purchased an underused 7-acre retail mall across the street from TCC. On that acreage, THA plans to build 300 to 500 apartments with commercial and community space. A portion of those apartments will be available to TCC students in need.<sup>67</sup>

Encouraging results from the pilot program, and the pressing need evident from the University of Wisconsin survey, compelled THA and TCC to expand the CHAP program in 2017. The CHAP is now equipped to house 150 homeless or near homeless TCC students. It will have a sub-cohort of 25 students who begin their TCC studies while incarcerated. When they get out of prison, they come to campus and continue their studies. Most of them are mothers reuniting with children and their housing problems are worse than most.<sup>64</sup> THA has also recently expanded the CHAP to include homeless and near-homeless students attending the University of Washington at Tacoma.

	Homeless/ Near Homeless TCC Students Receiving Housing Assistance (47)	Homeless/ Near Homeless TCC Students Receiving No Housing Assistance (154)
Graduated or Remaining Enrolled	<b>60%</b>	<b>16%</b>
Grade Point Average	<b>3.05</b>	<b>2.75</b>

TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY AND  
TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

↳ COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNT (CSA)  
PROGRAM AND COLLEGE BOUND  
SCHOLARSHIP ENROLLMENT  
PROJECT

THA launched its College Savings Account (CSA) Program in the fall of 2015. The CSA program is a partnership with Tacoma Public Schools, Heritage Bank, and philanthropic sources. In Tacoma, low-income students and students of color are now graduating from high school at rates comparable to higher-income students and white students. Yet, they go on to post-high school degree or certificate programs at much lower rates. The CSA seeks to address several barriers that keep low-income children from pursuing postsecondary education and encourage students and their

parents to aspire for college early. Research from Prosperity Now suggests that low-income children with CSA accounts are three times more likely to attend college and four times more likely to graduate than those without accounts.

THA's CSA program serves the children of New Salishan—a THA HOPE VI redevelopment community of homeowners and renters. THA's CSA Program offers a bank account to all Salishan children. From kindergarten through fifth grade, THA matches the families' deposits



Photo by Tacoma Housing Authority

**“Without stable housing, college would not have been possible.”**  
– Student Dawn

## APPENDIX II: PROFILES » Tacoma

### TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY AND TACOMA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

#### COLLEGE SAVINGS ACCOUNT (CSA) PROGRAM AND COLLEGE BOUND SCHOLARSHIP ENROLLMENT PROJECT

in that account up to \$400 per year. From 6th grade through high school, the program offers the student a menu of benchmarks, mostly academic in nature. Upon the student making each benchmark, the program will make further deposits into the account up to \$700 per year. A student who, with his or her family, participates fully will graduate from high school with at least \$9,700. The program's contribution to that balance becomes available to the student solely for the cost of attendance at a qualified degree or certificate program.<sup>68</sup> The program also offers families financial literacy instruction to set them up for success.

The main metrics for the program are high school graduation rates, college enrollment rates, and college graduation rates. Shorter-term metrics include rates of attendance, school discipline, reading test scores, grade point average, and the extent to which unbanked families get banked. The Urban Institute completed an initial evaluation of the CSA's implementation in the fall of 2017, which found that the majority of students met milestones and were accruing funds in their savings accounts. THA is considering proposals for evaluations that will assess the long-term success of the program.

The THA College Bound Scholarship Enrollment Project takes a similar long-term approach to helping low-income students regard college as reachable, affordable, and a place where they belong if they wish to go. The College Bound Scholarship is a Washington State initiative that pays tuition for low-income students attending a public in-state postsecondary program.<sup>69</sup> In order to receive the scholarship, however, students and their families must sign up by the end of their eighth-grade year. When THA's enrollment effort

A  
student who  
participates fully will  
graduate from high  
school with at least  
\$9,700.

began, less than half of eligible housing authority residents signed up for the program.<sup>70</sup>

THA resolved to sign up all of its eligible eighth-graders every year. After the first year's effort, 83 percent signed up. Thereafter, THA reached 100 percent enrollment three years in a row. It accomplished this by including the necessary scholarship paperwork in the paperwork that HUD-assisted families must complete on a yearly basis.<sup>71</sup> Since then THA has also participated in a very aggressive city-wide enrollment effort that takes place in middle schools, subordinating its own efforts to rely on the middle school enrollment initiative.

The College Bound Scholarship is an important companion of the CSA. The scholarship means that the CSA balances will not be necessary for tuition. Instead, it will be useful for the non-tuition costs of attendance like books, fees, and living expenses.

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**ABOVE: A first year One Million Degrees Scholar at Kennedy-King College in Chicago.**

Photo by Jason Geil/Chicago PhotoPress

**BELOW: The Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and Kids Progress, Inc. (KPI) hosted its 6th Annual Scholarship Celebration.**

**COVER TOP: Family Scholar House graduate Stephanie hangs her diploma.**

Photo from Family Scholar House, Louisville

**COVER BOTTOM: A Family Scholar House associates degree graduate with her daughter.**

Photo from Family Scholar House, Louisville

