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**Sent:** Wednesday, September 16, 2020 4:50 PM  
**To:** Katzen, Amy (OHHS - Contractor) <[Amy.Katzen.CTR@ohhs.ri.gov](mailto:Amy.Katzen.CTR@ohhs.ri.gov)>  
**Cc:** Clement, Brenda <[bclement@rwu.edu](mailto:bclement@rwu.edu)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] : Housing Works Comments to EOHHS SDOH strategy Report

Hello Amy,

In response to The Social Determinant of Health strategy report, Housing Works and the Rhode Island Alliance for Healthy Homes would like to add the following comments and suggestions. To begin, we applaud EOHHS and its efforts to mitigate racial disparities in low-income communities of color through addressing upstream systemic issues such as housing. We would like to bring attention to the severity of needs faced by low-income renters. RI is facing an immediate need for direct investment in both housing conditions and housing affordability for Medicaid patients. As highlighted in the 2020 Housing Fact Book, **Housing cost burdens** remain stubbornly high, especially across the lowest quintile incomes. While the two lowest income quintiles for those with mortgages had cost burden rates that were 1 percent greater than last year, renters' cost burdens and severe cost burdens increased significantly across nearly all income quintiles.

In addition, critical factors related to **Housing and Health** show the adverse impact of having 74 percent of Rhode Island's housing stock built before 1979 on the ability to ensure lead safe homes, with only 6 percent of that older stock meeting the standard. In connecting the dots between housing conditions and the spread of COVID-19, data show that 12 percent of renter and 3 percent of homeowner households in Rhode Island are overcrowded. In keeping with other findings, a disproportionate share of those in overcrowded households are Latinx, who comprise 26 percent of those affected compared to their 15 percent share of the overall population.

The critical shortage of housing during a pandemic where shelter is paramount to safety serves to emphasize the massive gap in the production of homes for **Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness**. The 2019 point-in-time count reported 727 individuals and 111 families in need, while the five-year averages for the creation of long-term affordable rental homes for those with special needs is 33, and 84 for families.

We suggest the following considerations be included in the EOHHS SDOH strategy as potential solutions to both housing condition and affordability:

1. **Construction and preservation of affordable housing**
2. **Rental subsidies for low and very low-income households.**
3. **Necessary supportive services for those placed in congregate care facilities and permanent housing**
4. **Coordinated effort to retrofit homes in order to mitigate trips and falls, Lead poisoning, and asthma triggers.**

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