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## **REPORT TIES RACIAL INEQUITY AND HOMELESSNESS**

(Columbus, OH) – A new report shows overwhelming evidence that people of color are dramatically over-represented in the nation’s homeless population, and poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation. Led by Community Shelter Board, Columbus participated in national research conducted by the Center for Social Innovation. The project, Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities (SPARC), focused on six communities – Atlanta, Columbus, Dallas, San Francisco, Syracuse, and Pierce County, Washington.

The study found that 78% of people experiencing homelessness in these communities were people of color. Broken down further, 64.7% were Black, 28% were White, and 6.9% identified as Hispanic/Latino. By comparison, the general population of the U.S. is 73.8% White, 12.4% Black, and 17.2% Hispanic/Latino.

“This research confirmed what we are seeing in Columbus – consequences of a long history of structural racism in the U.S.”, said Michelle Heritage, executive director of Community Shelter Board. “Columbus-specific numbers show that Black people make up 22% of the general population and 40% of those living in poverty – yet 65% of those served in our homeless system are Black. This tells us that poverty rates don’t explain the disparity.”

The national study included mixed methods research and structured dialogue to understand how people are experiencing systemic racism in relation to homelessness, and to leverage that knowledge toward systems transformation. The report recommends systemic policy changes to shore up fair housing protections, regulate the national housing market, develop more affordable housing, and increase regulations and protective legislation around evictions.

“I’m proud that Columbus is already leading the way with Mayor Ginther’s proposed tax incentives for mixed-income housing development”, said Heritage. “And our community is mobilizing in a number of ways to tackle rates of eviction, with leadership from the Columbus Women’s Commission, the Legal Aid Society, and the Prevent Family Homelessness Collaborative.”

The report also recommends organizational action at the programmatic level, which is well underway in Columbus. A group of local service providing agencies organized during the two-year research project to deepen conversation about racism at the grassroots level among professionals in the homeless system. They are currently developing areas

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of focus for anti-racist strategies and initiatives that will be included in a new strategic plan to articulate the community's vision for making sure everyone has a safe and stable place to call home. Being built with input from voices across the community, the plan is being developed with an intentional focus on increasing equity and reducing disparities among people disproportionately represented among those who experience homelessness, including strategies to increase access to responsive, equitable assistance to offset structural barriers and biases.

The organizations that funded research for the SPARC project in Columbus are United Way of Central Ohio, Community Shelter Board, and Columbus Urban League. [Read the report here.](#)

*Community Shelter Board leads a coordinated, community effort to make sure everyone has a place to call home. CSB is the collective impact organization driving strategy, accountability, collaboration, and resources to achieve the best outcomes for people facing homelessness in Columbus and Franklin County. CSB brings together 16 agencies across the community to work together as a cohesive system for change. With the support of a compassionate community, its system of care served 12,000 people last year with homelessness prevention, shelter, street outreach, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing. CSB is funded by the City of Columbus, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners, the United Way of Central Ohio, The Columbus Foundation, Nationwide Foundation, American Electric Power Foundation, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the State of Ohio, and many other public and private investors.*