



July 25, 2022

ARPA - RFP Coordinator
Monroe County Purchasing and Central Services
39 West Main Street, Room 200
Rochester, NY 14614

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support of Rochester ENergy Efficiency and Weatherization (RENEW)'s application to receive critical funding from Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Opportunities.

RENEW's partners in collective impact, community development, housing, environmental health, climate change, and weatherization include: Action for a Better Community, City of Rochester, Climate Solutions Accelerator, Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning, Common Ground Health, Greater Rochester Housing Partnership, Heat Smart Monroe, Metro Justice, Monroe County Dept. of Public Health, Monroe County Office on Aging, NeighborWorks Community Partners, PathStone Corporation, Rochester Housing Development Fund Corporation, Town of Greece, Town of Irondequoit, and University of Rochester. The RENEW Dream Team can call upon decades of related experience, successes, and technical expertise.

Common Ground Health (formerly Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency) has been working with RENEW and its community partners on healthy homes issues, environmental justice, and identifying the social determinants of health for nearly 20 years. A key hub of our past work has been through the Coalition to Prevent Lead Poisoning and the Rochester Healthy Home Partnership, which have been meeting at Common Ground Health (pre-pandemic) for over a decade. These diverse networks of community partners span multiple sectors interested in promoting healthy homes in Rochester, both through resident education/capacity-building and physical improvement of housing and continue to focus on the educational, resource, and capacity needs of environmental justice communities. Rochester ENergy Efficiency and Weatherization is a direct outgrowth of CPLP and RHHP and includes many of the same partners who have matured and expanded their fundamental understanding of how "place matters," together.

Public health researchers have identified and connected the quality and safety of one's home and community to one's health outcome. In this regard housing is routinely described as a social determinant of health. Research focused on the Greater Rochester region and indoor health quality, more broadly, has indicated that building materials used in homes built before the 1950s such as lead, asbestos, and formaldehyde, gases such as carbon monoxide and radon, and irritants such as black mold caused by inadequate ventilation can trigger or cause various health conditions such as lead poisoning, asthma, different types of cancers, if continuously exposed to these hazards. These hazards are especially dangerous for children and elderly adults.

This research and knowledge of the region's housing stock suggests that the work being undertaken by RENEW and its partners are necessary to improve the quality of housing and reduce the impact of these hazards on residents' lives. Additionally, the ability to live in a safe, healthy, and comfortable home undoubtedly impacts residents' length of stay in a home and community. In urban communities and neighborhoods of color, such as those that received the majority of RENEW's funding to date, reducing resident transiency is especially important for building social capital, increasing the overall value of homes in the community/neighborhood and creating stable community/neighborhood infrastructure to facilitate inter-generational wealth building.

Just over a year ago, Common Ground Health conducted an evaluation to assess the processes by which the Rochester ENergy Efficiency and Weatherization (RENEW) program engages and collaborates with community partners to assist homeowners in Monroe County, and particularly those in the City of Rochester, complete energy-efficient home improvements. Additionally, the evaluation sought to understand what is RENEW's collective impact on improving the

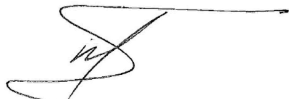
quality of life and health outcomes for residents and their families who have completed energy-efficient home improvements paid for in-part or fully with a RENEW grant.

RENEW and its community partners are engaging in essential and timely work in the Greater Rochester region. Starting with the initial program implementation and continuing with its current iteration, RENEW and the coalition it helped to create has been at the forefront of helping low-income homeowners complete healthy and whole home improvements. To this end, and by all measures, RENEW has successfully built and maintained a transformative coalition of advocates and funders who are actively engaged in work to improve the quality of housing in greater Monroe County.

RENEW's work to maintain the coalition around improving housing quality is evidence that successful coalition building can be done and can be maintained in the Greater Rochester region. Between 2016 to July 2022, the program has funded 100% of projects that have applied for bridge funding. This is not only momentous but unique. This feature of the program differentiates it from other whole and healthy homes-based programs currently in operation across the country. Furthermore, this funding success illustrates the need for RENEW's continued operation and growth.

RENEW's has multiple socioeconomic co-benefits including transforming neighborhoods, building wealth, preventing home foreclosure, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and creating improved health outcomes for low-income families. Investing in home "health" is an essential cornerstone and unmet need to combatting poverty, helping low-income homeowners stabilize their personal and financial situation, and building community-wide economic stability.

We support RENEW's proposal to Monroe County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding Opportunities to expand the program, help shift the social determinants of health, and create a healthier community in which to live, work, and play.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Wade S. Norwood', written over a horizontal line.

Wade S. Norwood, CEO
Common Ground Health