



PSOs for Housing Justice

May 15, 2025 | 1:00pm – 2:15pm ET

Attending: Michael Durham (FTEH), Elisa Harrigan (FHO), Adrienne Wells (Philanthropy Ohio), Joshua Perrin (FTEH), Katy Pellisier (SCG), Kevin Douglas (GCIR), Chimene Okere (NFG)

Guests: NA

Regrets: Lauren Bennett, Arpita Jindani, Patte Koval, Robin Mockenhaupt, Kyle Malone, Cema Siegel, Sarah Frankfurth

Agenda

- Welcome | Grounding | Introductions
- National housing/homelessness policy updates
- Circle discussion on member priorities
- Closing
 - Next meeting is July 17

Notes

Michael initiated the meeting with a short grounding exercise followed by introductions. Elisa provided updates on the latest federal developments on homelessness and housing, including:

- The President's so-called skinny budget is really a starvation budget: it will cut major programs, including consolidating the Continuum of Care program and a 43% reduction to rental assistance programs. Few departments besides Defense saw a budget increase, but there the proposal does include modest increases specifically for homeless veterans. Crucially, any remaining rental assistance will be limited to two years for eligible households.
- The President's budget also affects the tax system, imposing a new tax on private foundations that would cut into programs. Do note that lobbying restrictions do not pertain to efforts to "self-defense," efforts to preserve foundations' own existence.
- Outside of HUD, we are especially concerned about major cuts and restrictions on Medicaid, which represents a uniquely promising advocacy opportunity as republican congressional districts rely heavily on Medicaid.
- We're also tracking the component of the tax bill that would allow the Secretary of Treasury to revoke the IRS status of any nonprofit it deems to support a terrorist organization. Countless nonprofits would be at risk. All of this affects our movements across sectors, and we need to be unified in our response in turn.

Even as we defend against such drastic cuts, Michael added, Funders Together also hopes communities can take the opportunity to reimagine what systems we will need to build in the wake of defunded programs: we can do better than the Continuum of Care structure, for example. Elisa also reported about the May 1st eviction of a longstanding encampment in Oregon where hundreds of people had been living. Despite local outcry, the national forest service claims the need to use the land for logging. We are concerned about other usage of the national forest service

for encampment clearings. Kevin added that much of the harmful budget cuts is driven by animosity toward immigrants even though they also affect non-immigrants.

Turning to discussion, Michael set up the Circle process, an ancient tradition belonging to Indigenous people all over the world that we can use to ensure everyone's voice is heard. In summary:

- Michael described his own work with Health Funders for Housing Justice, a network of Funders Together's members who work at the intersection of health and homelessness, which is especially interested in harm reduction and drug policy, in addition to defense of federal programs. He also looks forward to Funders Together's forthcoming Community of Practice that will build upon two cohorts of Foundation for Racial Equity.
- Adrienne shared about her Housing Policy Table at Philanthropy Ohio, which is an experiment in member engagement, and described her participation in Ohio Medicaid Matters, which is top of mind with impending threats to Medicaid funding.
- Katy's priorities also pertain to Medicaid because of how it affects every other issue area; this comes as Governor Newsom is retreating from covering undocumented people through Medi-Cal. She's encouraged by decreased siloization between issue areas within SCG's membership, including via the LA chapter of Funders Together to End Homelessness, which SCG hosts, and the energy expressed in their recent policy-focused conference.
- Chimene reflected on the other side of the coin of the aforementioned budget updates, that policing and systems that criminalize people in poverty stand to benefit from the budget. In light of this, NFG is partnering with FTEH and FHO on a webinar May 21 that will include representatives from the National Homelessness Law center, VOCAL-US, and Drug Policy Alliance, uplifting a table organizing against criminalization across sectors. He's also excited about an ongoing partnership to organize tenants across California.
- Elisa noted how engagement in their recent webinars/convenings has been relatively low, and she wonders how much this relates to foundations' risk assessments. To help us understand what funders need from us PSOs, FHO is leading a survey to inform how members want to be engaged. She also plugged FHO and FTEH's June 10 webinar on tax policy through a racial justice lens.

In discussion, we named the need to coordinate on funder briefings to reduce redundancy and improve coordination between national and regional policy priorities. Chimene offered to support the emerging agenda for the June 10th tax webinar. We also discussed whether new donors are entering the housing justice space for the first time and how we optimize those new resources.

In closing, Michael noted that our next meeting takes place right after the United Philanthropy Forum conference, though we plan to keep it on the calendar. We also hope to spotlight other PSO partners at future meetings as we did with GCIR in March.