

## National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition- Policy Options

### Introduction

One of the main goals of the National Healthy Housing Summit your organization attended on May 7, 2009 was to begin crafting a well-defined, consensus-based and achievable *National Healthy Housing Action Plan* that most of the attendees would support and work collectively to implement.

Summit participants framed the major challenges and opportunities in crafting a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan*, with the following questions:

- 1) How can we take the summit's work to the next step by creating an ongoing dialogue/coalition, reach consensus on the most promising courses of action, and begin taking collective action?
- 2) How can we convince health care payers to invest in environmental interventions when their best practices, models and compensation focus on traditional medical management?
- 3) How do we persuade developers, property managers and building owners to do likewise when the benefits are primarily medical?
- 4) How can we take advantage of the growing momentum on major energy and health care legislation?
- 5) Even if we could do the above, how do we build the nationwide infrastructure and workforce to carry out such programs?

### Identifying the Initial Building Blocks of a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan*

The Summit facilitator solicited from the 40+ participants 55 major recommendations for possible inclusion in a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan*.

From that lengthy list, we culled a shorter list of recommendations that were sufficiently specific, had the potential for nationwide impact, and were most appropriate for joint action by predominantly Washington-based organizations. (Thus, for example, we deleted those ideas that were strictly state or locally focused or that were most appropriate for a foundation grant proposal.). We would now like to take the next step in building a *National Healthy Housing Action Plan* by asking you to help us to pare down the following list further.

### Instructions

PLEASE review the following options before our meeting on Monday, July 27 at 9:00 a.m. and rate each option as:

1. **Retain:** We should retain for the next draft and further group discussion/refinement.
2. **Need More Info:** We need more details, clarification or explanation before we can decide whether to retain this for the next draft or drop.
3. **Drop:** We can drop this because it is unrealistic, too hard to achieve, not as high a priority as other options, not appropriate for this group's action, or for another reason.

Be prepared to share your initial cut of priorities at the meeting with the expectation that the group will have a subsequent opportunity to refine and define the highest priorities further. You will also have the opportunity to suggest ideas that did not emerge at the Summit.

### National Collaboration/Partnership-Building Options:

**Form a National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition:** Virtually no national solutions will get off the ground without first having a viable coalition to advocate for them. Recruit the summit's "G-40" and other key stakeholders to form a coalition, continue "busting silos" where they work only on single issues, and define a crosscutting agenda including the items below. First responders and home safety groups should be included in the Coalition, as well as associations of building owners and property managers, juvenile justice and education reform advocates, pediatricians, and other physicians. **Green= 10**

**Engage the Home Insurance Industry:** Insurance companies, through groups like the Institute for Business and Home Safety, should be among the strongest supporters of healthier housing codes, better enforcement, and risk-based premiums that encourage health and safety repairs, because they can prevent billions in claims. **Green= 4, Yellow= 4**

**Begin a Dialogue with Health Insurers, Major Employers, and CMS:** Commercial health plans, large self-insured companies, Medicare, and Medicaid collectively spend billions annually to treat housing-related illnesses and injuries. Insurance brokers advise many employers on the best plan to choose. Urge CMS, health plans, brokers and self-insured employers to initiate demonstration projects with their members and changes in coverage policies. **Green=6**

**Approach the Congressional Black Caucus:** Seek interest, expertise, and assistance in developing a federal legislative/regulatory agenda that would reduce health and housing disparities in communities of color. **Green=7, Yellow=1**

### Federal Legislative Options:

**Work Collectively to Pass Senator Jack Reed's Two Healthy Housing Bills:** Twelve organizational participants of the summit have already signaled their support. **Green= 10**

**Advocate for Sustainable Funding/Appropriations of Current Healthy Housing Programs:** These would include several programs administered by HUD, CDC, EPA, the Department of Energy and the Department of Agriculture (see [www.nchh.org/Policy/National-Policy/Federal-Appropriations.aspx](http://www.nchh.org/Policy/National-Policy/Federal-Appropriations.aspx)). **Green= 9**

**Restore Cuts to Housing Choice Vouchers:** Research shows that families who move into private-sector housing with vouchers experience significant health improvements. Previous Congresses and the prior Administration cut 170,000 Section 8 vouchers over the past several years. The FY10 President's Budget includes \$1.77 billion over the 2009 enacted levels for the Housing Choice Voucher Program. The House Appropriations Committee has passed a budget with a similar level of funding. **How many votes did this get?**

**Add a Healthy Housing Component to Planned Healthcare Reform Legislation:** Given that diabetes, asthma, unintentional injuries, and other major health problems account for a large share of health care expenses and that cost-effective healthy housing solutions are available, Congress should include them as part of the prevention, standard coverage, and/or reimbursement section of a health reform bill. **Green= 3, Yellow= 2, Red= 1**

**Identify and Address Unintended Negative Consequences of Current Federal Laws:** No comprehensive analysis has been conducted of the many federal programs that have unintended negative impacts on healthy housing. For example, Title X of the Housing and Community Development Act excludes zero-bedroom units from lead-paint requirements, yet

hundreds of thousands of low-income families live in single-room occupancy units. Similarly, the weatherization program requires a cost benefit calculation for all energy measures, typically disqualifying window replacement; yet windows in older homes are a key contributor to lead dust and lead poisoning. **Green= 3, Yellow= 1**

**Support the “Community Building Code Administration Grant Act of 2008”:** Systematic code enforcement in rental housing is a rarity in this country largely due to a lack of local capacity, including financial resources. This bill would authorize HUD to distribute up to \$20 million in competitive grants to local building code enforcement departments annually, particularly those collaborating with health departments and other groups. **Green= 10**

**Add Healthy Housing Considerations to Pending Energy Legislation:** The House has passed and the Senate is considering major energy/climate change legislation that includes large, comprehensive programs to promote energy efficiency in new and existing homes. Congress should consider adding a healthy housing component to this legislation (e.g., by expanding list of allowable home safety repairs under the Weatherization Assistance Program). **Green= 3, Yellow=1**

**Tie Adoption of a Healthy Housing Code/Program to a Federal Funding Stream:** To receive \$3 billion in new Energy Efficiency Block Grants, DOE requires that states initiate an effort to adopt the 2009 International Energy Efficiency Code. Similarly, HUD could require or incentivize state adoption of the International Property Maintenance Code in conjunction with receiving federal funds. **Green= 5, Yellow=3**

#### **Federal Regulatory/Administrative Options:**

**Leverage Current Federal Programs through Formal Interagency Agreements:** We can deliver several *current* healthy housing services at once rather than singularly through interagency agreements that eliminate silos and promote collaboration across federal agencies (e.g., by bringing Weatherization Assistance managers together with HUD’s Office of Healthy Housing and Lead Hazard Control to explore how a portion of Weatherization stimulus funds could be used to train weatherization contractors in healthy homes). **Green=3, Yellow=4**

**Add a Healthy Housing Inspection Requirement to Federally-Backed Mortgages:** Mortgages backed by FHA and VA, and those acquired by Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, impose numerous safety requirements but ignore others and most healthy housing conditions. Seek a federal regulation or policy to add a healthy homes inspection (currently averaging \$300) to federally-backed mortgages. Simultaneously work with the banking and mortgage trade groups to promote a voluntary healthy homes inspection. **Green=6**

**Include Healthy Housing in the Department of Labor’s New Green Jobs Training Programs:** The stimulus bill provides the Department of Labor with \$500 million for green jobs training programs and \$250 million to promote green jobs in the healthcare sector, mostly through competitive grants. It may have the statutory flexibility to add healthy housing training, such as lead remediation, radon mitigation, and integrated pest management. Healthy housing advocates and experts should also team with green job providers and trainers to apply for these funds jointly. **Green= 5**

**Seek HUD Regulatory/Policy Change on Homes It Resells “As Is”:** HUD could set standards, provide up-front disclosures and/or grant funds to meet healthy housing criteria before HUD-owned homes are placed on the market for purchase by the public. **Green=6, Yellow=1**

**Enforce the Human Health Components of NEPA across All Federal Agency EIS’s:** Urge a policy clarification, applicable government-wide, that the National Environmental Policy Act’s requirements for assessing human health impacts of major federal actions calls for a “Health Impact Assessment” along the lines of San Francisco’s approach. **Yellow= 4**

**Expand Recent Efforts to “Green” HUD-Owned and Assisted Housing into Healthy Housing:** Efforts are underway to implement a consistent set of green measures across HUD’s programs. For these programs, HUD should ensure that its green criteria incorporates a comprehensive set of health and safety measures. **Green= 8**

**Consider Revitalizing and Linking to Existing Executive Orders:** EO 12898 on Environmental Justice directed federal agencies to develop and implement strategies for their programs and policies that reduce the disproportional harmful environmental health impacts on minority or low-income populations as well as ensuring that the affected communities have input in the decision-making process regarding environmental issues in their communities. EO 13045 Executive Order on Children’s Environmental Health and Safety directed all federal agencies to take into account the special risks and disproportionate impact that standards and safeguards have on children. Advocates should meet with the relevant White House staff to revitalize and link healthy housing to these Executive Orders. **Green= 3, Yellow=2**

**Advocate with HUD to Issue a Uniform Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Policy:** HUD should develop a prescriptive and directive IPM policy at the federal level that can be adopted at the local level. This policy should be accompanied by federal dollars for localities to train IPM operators. **Green= 4, Yellow =1**