



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN
Tuesday, November 22, 2022; Cleveland Municipal School District Board Business Meeting, Halle School, 7901 Halle School: Cleveland Metropolitan School District Sixth Grade Halle School Student Jeilian Toledo sings *Stand by Me* as part of a duet with fellow sixth grade student Michael Dinickle.

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Vol. 50, No. 1 January 2023

Plain Press

Cleveland's Near Westside Newspaper

City Council passes Wage Theft and Payroll Fraud Prevention Ordinance

by Bruce Checefsky

On Monday, December 5, 2022, Cleveland City Council passed the Wage Theft and Payroll Fraud Prevention Ordinance, which prohibits the City of Cleveland from entering into contracts with all businesses,

from construction companies to food vendors, found to practice wage theft in the past three years.

Wage theft is defined as a violation of any federal or State of Ohio law regarding prompt payment of wages, minimum wage standards, prevailing

wage rates, and hours worked. The most blatant wage theft is an employee asked to work overtime or through breaks or asked to report early or leave late, all without pay.

The Ordinance places the burden on employers entering into contracts with the City to disclose any adverse determination. An adverse determination is a denial or limited authorization of a requested service. Failure to disclose will subject the individual or entity to criminal penalties. Once listed as an adverse determination with the Fair Employment Wage Board (FEWB), the employer will remain there for the next three years.

An employer can be removed from the list before the period lapses by receiving a waiver if it results in a major disruption to City operations, a change in ownership since the adverse determination, or if they have complied with the requirements of the final action placing them on the list.

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PHOTO BY BRUCE CHECEFSKY
Monday, December 5, 2022; just outside of the Cleveland City Council Chambers, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside Avenue: Guardians for Fair Work members Nora Kelley and Justin Strekal celebrate Cleveland City Council's passage of Fair Work legislation. Members of Guardians for Fair Work lobbied for the legislation as part of a campaign to end wage theft in Cleveland.



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, December 10, 2022; Jones Home Neighborhood Holiday Sweater Party at Phunkenship 3135 Sackett Ave: "Sassy" Sascha Macias spreads Christmas cheer to all.

Loved ones celebrate with Tree of Remembrance

by Erik Ault

On December 17, Walter Martens & Sons Funeral Home dedicated a Tree of Remembrance for the lives of loved ones who have passed over the past year.

"We owe it to our loved ones to remain strong and continue sharing their life stories within our own stories. We do this because we are strong enough for the task," Victoria Shea Martens announced as she welcomed people to the service. The service was held in the funeral home chapel as well as broadcast online.

"I have the honor of speaking about my cousin, the late Bernadine Zub Martens who passed away 25 years ago," her cousin Joseph Mosinski shared. "Bernadine was a loving wife and devoted mother. She spent her years as a funeral director and created wonderful after care programs such as the Tree of Remembrance to help us all remember our loved ones. Those 25 years just shot by," he said. The funeral home continues to honor her presence by dedicating the Tree of Remembrance every holiday season.

The service was officiated by Pastor James Beight of Abram Creek Baptist Church in Cleveland. "We recognize that this season can be especially difficult for those who have lost family members. We are

asking that this service would be one of the ways you comfort those who grieve," he prayed, opening the service.

"It's vibrant with life, bursting with beauty and heavy laden with love and kindness. It's an emblem of peace. Its tranquil glows replace the darkness of our fear and hate with the brilliance of peace and love. It's an expression of joy, and its boughs bear loving gifts for those whom we hold dear," Pastor Beight remarked as he officially dedicated the tree. The Tree of Remembrance stands in the foyer of the funeral home and is adorned with ornaments decorated by the family members of those who have passed.

With poetry, reflections and candles, the lives of loved ones were recalled and celebrated. The names of those who have passed away this past year were read, and a separate, smaller tree was dedicated to those children and infants who also passed.

"There are just so many things that no one can explain when one of us is taken while the rest of us remain," read Margaret Griffin Mullins.

Pat Shea honored the military members who passed away by dedicating a flag: "She is a reminder

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Ohio Fair Lending and Vital Communities Conference examines housing issues in Cuyahoga County

by Bruce Checefsky

Frank Ford, Senior Policy Advisor, Fair Housing Center for Rights and Advisor with Vacant and Abandoned Property Action Council (VAPAC), presented the preliminary findings of a mortgage lending analysis in Cuyahoga County during the 33rd Annual Ohio Fair Lending and Vital Communities Conference. In a six-year review of home purchases and home

repair lending by seven leading banks, 46 percent of all home purchases on the Black-majority east side were made by investor buyers from outside of Cleveland.

"Investors buy homes for rental purposes. It leads to a decrease in homeownership for the rest of the population," said Ford. "This happens more disproportionately in Black communities with a greater impact on

African Americans."

Home improvement loans are given to white homeowners twice as often as Black homeowners, even given the same income level. Ford compared home sales in 2021 to loans and found more than 4,000 sales with only 900 mortgages. With a medium sale price of \$45,000 on the Eastside, buyers are paying cash. In the outer suburbs,

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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, December 17, 2022; Walter Martens & Sons Funeral Home 9811 Denison Ave: An elf ornament basking in the glow of the lights on the Tree of Remembrance.



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Friday, December 16, 2022; All State Barber College 2546 Lorain Avenue: Antonio Guerra, 30, practices his barber skills on fellow student Mahdi Jaber. Antonio is from the Clark-Fulton neighborhood and intends on graduating in November. When asked why he wants to be a barber, he responded, "I enjoy meeting and serving all different kinds of people."

ADVOCACY
DISABILITY ECONOMIC JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE: For information on the work of the collaborative visit: TCE.org.

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arts-inspiredlearning.org. Or register at: https://arts-inspiredlearning.org/play-it-forward-cleveland/?mc_cid=462aa52d8e&mc_eid=caf778a4e9
FREE CRAFTY FRIDAYS at Art House. Select Fridays from January 6 to March 17 from 5-6:30 p.m. Have you ever made a Perler Bead key chain or a flower arrangement before? Now is your chance to do so and not make a mess at your own home. Bring family and friends on Fridays for free, fun, art, and crafts. Lite refreshments served. Registration is suggested. Visit www.athouse.org for more information and

to register.
WALKABOUT TREMONT: Friday, January 13th from 5-10 p.m. on Professor Avenue and surrounding streets. For more information visit: walkabout-tremont.com.

OPEN CALL SPACES: SPACES invites local, national, and international creative professionals at all stages of their careers who engage in experimental practices with strong conceptual foundations to apply to our 2023 Open Call! Applications will be accepted now until January 19, @ 11:59 PM. Questions may be directed to SPACES staff at contact@spacescle.org

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUNDING FOR ARTISTS: [Photography Submission](http://PhotographySubmission) | CAN Journal | Deadline: Jan 6; [Artist Residency](http://ArtistResidency) | Praxis Fiber Workshop | Deadline: Jan 15; [Artist Residency](http://ArtistResidency) | ATNSC | Deadline: Jan 16; [Arts Education Specialist](http://ArtsEducationSpecialist) | Zygo Press | Jan 17; [Open Call](http://OpenCall) | SPACES | Deadline: Jan 19; [Call for Submissions](http://CallforSubmissions) | Kaiser Gallery | Deadline: Jan 20; and [Call for artist](http://CallforArtist) | The Sculpture Center | Deadline: Jan 29.

ASSISTANCE
PREVENTION, RETENTION AND CONTINGENCY (PRC) FUNDING: Merrick House has Prevention, Retention, and Contingency (PRC) funding available to assist anyone with rent or utility payments. Payments are limited to \$125.00 per household and will be paid directly to the vendor. Interested parties should call Merrick

Residents and school staff raise some concerns at Board of Education meetings

by Chuck Hoven

The minutes of the December 13th meeting of the Cleveland Municipal Board of Education included a response to two questions raised by educational advocate Don Freeman at the November 22nd meeting of the Board at Halle School. The minutes also provided an answer to a long-standing question raised by educational advocate Gene Tracy as to whether the City of Cleveland Administration would adhere to a promise to hold the Cleveland Metropolitan School District harmless from the property tax exemption

given to the Cleveland Browns Stadium.

Freeman's first question concerned when the replacement for John Nesta, the liaison between the trade unions and Max Hayes High School's construction program would be in place. Nesta retired at the end of the last school year. The liaison helps to introduce construction program students to opportunities for union apprenticeships. Cleveland Metropolitan School District Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon included in the minutes his

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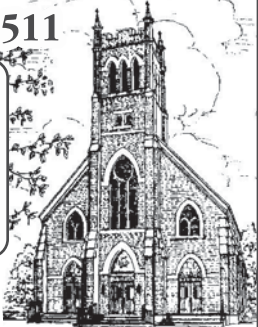
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Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. This is known as skimming. In skimming, criminals use a device placed over a point-of-sale card reader that steals information from payment cards like the SNAP Ohio Direction and Ohio Works First (OWF) Ohio Pathway cards. This means SNAP or cash assistance benefits could be stolen without a customer knowing. **Unfortunately, Cuyahoga County now has confirmed cases of this fraud.** SNAP recipients should check their accounts for any irregularities, change their PIN, and look at any card reader before using it to check for possible skimming devices. The Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) is taking a proactive approach to address public assistance fraud and is sending customers "Tips for keeping your SNAP EBT and Cash cards safe" to increase awareness among customers on card skimming. These messages include ways customers can report fraud, tips to keep their cards safe, and some things to look out for. If a customer believes their benefits have been stolen, please notify the Cuyahoga County Department of Health and Human Services (CCDHHS) Department of Investigations and file a theft report with the local law enforcement agency. Below are the different ways you can report public benefit fraud: Complete and submit the online [Public Assistance Fraud Form](http://PublicAssistanceFraudForm) at <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.us/forms/public-assistance-fraud-referral-form>. Or call the CCDHHS Fraud Hotline at (216) 987- 6950
CUYAHOGA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS WARNS BUSINESSES OF TAX PAYMENT SCAMS: The Cuyahoga County Department of Consumer Affairs is alerting businesses to multiple mail scams that demand payment of alleged past-due taxes. The scam letters have a headline that says, "Distraint Warrant." They purport to be from "Cuyahoga County Tax Assessment Securities" or the "Cuyahoga County Tax Processing Unit" – offices that do not exist. The scam letters claim to be warrants for unpaid taxes. One version threatens business owners with seizure of their wages, bank accounts or

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Plain Press
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 Phone: (216) 621-3060
 email:
plainpress@gmail.com
 Advertising email:
plainpressads@yahoo.com
 Website:
<https://plainpress.blog>
 Plain Press © Established in 1971
 Circulation: 21,000 copies.
 Published monthly.
 Member of the
 Neighborhood and Community Media
 Association of Greater Cleveland
 Distribution area: Cuyahoga River west to W. 140, Lake Erie south to the Lower Big Creek Valley. Available free at over 500 locations.
 Managing Editor: Charles E. Hoven;
 Editor: Deborah Rose Sadlon;
 Copy Editor: Craig Bobby
 Reporters: Bruce Cechefsky & Erik Ault
 Photo Editor: Coriana Close;
 Photographer: Greg Rosenberg
 Advertising Sales: Ed Tishel
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Bound over: the other missing children

by Erik Ault

The Greater Cleveland Congregations (GCC) held a public hearing at the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church on December 6th to raise awareness about children in the justice system.

When a minor is tried and incarcerated as an adult, it is called "bindover." There are circumstances which require mandatory bindover, such as the defendant's age and the

nature of their offense, but there are cases when it is up to the judge to decide where the defendant's case will be tried, either in the juvenile court or regular court system. When a judge decides that a minor's case should be decided by the regular court, it is called discretionary bindover. According to Ben Sperry, co-chair of the Youth Bindover Team

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Reader offers critique of Section 8 program

To the editor:

My unit has minor issues that need repairs. The repairs have NOT been done since the last TWO inspections! I have let Section 8 know several times. I have showed the property manager 12 times since he got this house in January. I let him in my unit. I have given written notices and still nothing is fixed.

LETTER

They fixed the windows in here, and they were NOT installed correctly. They need to be redone. They were not caulked, and the property manager is well aware of this. The window guys were UNPROFESSIONAL, from Craigslist. Gas bills are \$200 a month in winter! Weather elements come right through windows, walls, and woodwork. There are three-inch gaps under all doors, etc.

There is mouse feces in the silverware drawer, and several minor things need doing. Now they are not doing this on purpose, to force me out of here. This is how they get Section 8 tenants out! This house is not even worth \$715 a month, let alone \$1,050 a month! THEY FIX NOTHING.

They fixed and remodeled the downstairs and did a bunch of stuff on the outside. BUT they NEVER fixed what the inspection failed them for in my unit! They left a tree that crashed into the fence, and it has been there since

January.

They are trying to raise the rent again, on a Section 8 unit. One investor bought this house, fixed my toilet, and then raised my rent from \$500 a month to \$715 a month in 2020. She told me she had to pay for the repairs. Section 8 told me on top of my rent portion that I would have to pay the \$215 raise. They said they don't pay for raises in rent. I DIDN'T get a raise in my income. So, this makes no sense!

So, the landlord is raising my rent again when my lease is up. I have been here for 12 years. Now I will have to move. Now Section 8 is saying because I am here on a one-bedroom voucher, and this is a two-bedroom apartment, that I will have to move to a one-bedroom if they raise the rent. What kind of sense does that make? Their rules are ridiculous. Their inspections make no sense. Someone needs to evaluate the Section 8 program. They need to see how many people lose their vouchers because they can't find a landlord to rent to them. They need to see the reasons WHY poor people are losing vouchers that they NEED! Section 8's answer for EVERYTHING is "then just move."

Section 8 is well-aware there are NO LANDLORDS to take vouchers! Someone needs to find out WHY they are doing this to people. I can't afford doubled and tripled rent prices!



PHOTO BY GREG ROSENBERG

Saturday, December 10, 2022; Snow Day in Detroit Shoreway, W. 65th and Detroit Avenue: A child, dressed for Snow Day, expresses thoughtful interest.

I can't apply for Eden, and I have mental disabilities. They are not taking any new people for three years now! I can't wait for disability because I must work. I don't qualify ANY of the buildings which Section 8 tells me to move to. There are two to five year waiting lists for buildings! I am also not disabled, or 55 to 65, which are the requirements for these buildings. I also have SEVERE Social Anxiety and can't live in a building with hundreds of people. Section 8 does NOT CARE and does not accommodate this issue. They are not even trained to talk to people with mental issues, depression, anxiety, etc.

Section 8 also NEVER offers the rent amount that the landlords want. They ALWAYS offer less, even after

the doubled and tripled rent increases they offer less! Then they tell you that if you can't pay the difference to cover the rest of the rent amount that they won't pay! This makes no sense. If we WERE allowed to pay the difference, and still have our Section 8 help, then PEOPLE WOULDN'T END UP HOMELESS because there are NO LANDLORDS TO CHOOSE FROM. They ALL DISCRIMINATE ON THE WAY I HAVE TO PAY MY RENT!! Section 8 is well-aware of this. They make it worse. If you ask 15 people at Section 8 one question, you will get 15 different answers. They are ruining this program for people who need it. I will be homeless. I have had SEVERAL panic attacks, loss of appetite, and suffer from insomnia because of the two years

of new owners, I HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEING HOMELESS. I have a bad heart too, and all they do is stress me out over this. AND NOBODY CARES.

I turned in my change of income, and I make less now than last year. Section 8 has NEVER given me my new rent amount. I have been waiting since February. I NEVER received anything! So, there's a HUGE possibility that they will say they sent me something with my new rent amount, and I'd be ten months behind on my rent amount. So, either way I look at it, I will end up homeless after 12 years here, and tripled rent prices that I can't afford.

Ms. Johnson mndymre2012@gmail.com
P.S. There is more stuff going on with the housing in Cleveland than you are writing about.

Landlord comments on Mayor Bibb's statement at press conference

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on your article in the November newspaper pertaining to Mayor Justin Bibb's press conference.

LETTER

Mayor Bibb stated that he would like to have an ordinance to hold out of state investors accountable for tenants being able to contact them for issues with repairs and keeping up the property.

As a landlord, myself, I am proud to say that my husband and I try to comply with all issues. When we receive the rent every month, we always ask the tenants if there is anything that needs to be addressed in the house.

We have two homes on one parcel and live in one while renting

the other, so we are available to our tenants to address any concerns they may have. We believe this is good business, and chances are good the home the tenants live in

will be taken care of on account of how we run our landlord business.

Thanks for a great newspaper.
Pauline Clark

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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

December 9, 2022; Hansa Haus 2717 Lorain Avenue: Krampus visits. Krampus is an Alpine tale of a demonic figure who visits those who have misbehaved and whips them with birch rods. Thankfully, no one was birched at Hansa Haus this evening.

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At a contentious meeting, Cuyahoga County Arts & Culture faced criticisms for secrecy, and unspent funds allocated for individual artists

Internal board disagreement bubbled to the surface as artists once again called for transparency and change

by **Bruce Checefsky**

Local artists have for four years now volleyed complaints at Cuyahoga Arts & Culture (CAC), the organization that distributes revenues from the county cigarette tax, for disbursing only a portion of the annual commitment of \$400,000 to individual artists.

It happened in 2022 yet again, as CAC spent only \$260,000 of the budgeted amount. As in previous years, the board voted to roll over the remaining amount to 2023.

At Cuyahoga Arts & Culture's annual meeting on December 14 at Trinity Commons, several artists were on hand for public comment and spoke on the issue.

One of the artists, Liz Maugans, arts advocate and Director of the YARDS Projects, expressed frustration over access to CAC information, saying the agency was not transparent with its funding programs.

"There exists a culture of exclusivity sealed in a complicated and inconsistent process that is difficult to navigate," she said. "CAC public records are hard to access, hyperlinks

do not work, memos were not attached to documents, and full PDF and data from audit pages were missing."

Maugans was a member of the Support for Artists Planning Team in 2017 that made recommendations to CAC, including creating an advisory committee to hold the agency accountable. CAC refused to accept their list of recommendations, deciding to change the language to fit their needs.

"CAC used our terminology without adopting our recommendations," she said. "They have rewritten history to favor the narrative of their agency."

Cleveland figurative artist Leigh Brooklyn was at the meeting. So was singer and guitarist Moises Borges. Borges, born in Bahia, Brazil, and based in Cleveland, was glad Maugans spoke out about the agency. He yielded his three minutes of public comment so she could finish speaking.

"Liz stood up for the artists," said Borges. "I felt frustrated when she was interrupted, especially since few people were there."

Jake Sinatra, the director of Grant Making Strategy and Communication,

reported on the 2023 budget of \$60,500 for Resident Grants through Neighborhood Connections, which funds projects through small grants to residents of Cleveland and East Cleveland up to \$5,000. Grant recipients must secure a dollar-for-dollar match equal to the

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BOUND OVER

continued from page 3

at GCC, discretionary bindover in Cuyahoga County is being abused.

"The more we educated ourselves, the more we were disturbed at what we were finding," he said. "We're here tonight to share with you what we've learned."

The first speaker from the team was Leah Winsberg, a staff attorney with Children's Law Center, Inc. "When a child is transferred to adult court, they're denied the rehabilitative focus of the juvenile justice system entirely," she announced. She shared that the rise of bindover began in the 90s when people were concerned about "Super Predators" bringing a wave of criminality. Due to paranoia about criminals getting off easy, judges began trying minors in the adult system more frequently. This happens mainly to children of color, she said. Instead of being rehabilitated, minors exposed to the adult justice system are often traumatized and face mental health hurdles that are not addressed. This experience can trap a minor in the justice system. In other words, a youth who faces bindover to the adult courts has very little hope of being rehabilitated.

According to Katherine Soto, assistant state public defender in the Youth Defense Department of the Office of the Ohio Public Defender, felony adjudications among youth are actually decreasing, including in Cuyahoga County. She showed this data to highlight that there is not a pressing need for minors to be bound over. Sensationalist headlines frightening people about remorseless youths do not give an accurate representation of youth crime, and the actions of the justice system should not be based on them. Despite other counties in Ohio decreasing bindover, Cuyahoga County maintains high use of discretionary bindover. In 2020, Cuyahoga County transferred 78 minors to the adult courts. In the same year, Franklin County, which encompasses Columbus and has a higher population, transferred seven.

After the presentations, a panel discussion was held. "It's not about being soft on crime. It's about being informed, research driven, evidence based and strategic," Leah Winsberg said. "These approaches are going to get us a long-term impact on reduced crime," he added.

"The priorities and goals of Cuyahoga and every society should absolutely include protecting the most vulnerable citizens," TaKasha Smith, executive director and policy director of the Juvenile Justice Coalition said. "We need to view our children's success as what it is, which is our success. Our only guarantee of future success is that children are protected and able to rehabilitate when they make mistakes and able to join society effectively, successfully, ready to be productive. That is our guarantee of future success."

Citizens who are interested in learning more about what they can do to address the issue of bindover can visit greaterclevelandcongregations.org to get involved.

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TREE OF REMEMBRANCE

continued from page one

that she is the flag of our country and home, with liberty and justice for all.”

A wreath was lit by Yvette Walsh and Joseph Mosinski. “A candle has its allotted span of life to burn. Yet while the candle burns, it radiates light and heat. After the candle is extinguished or consumed, the fire of life and love still burns,” Joseph said as they lit the candles. The candles were dedicated to the emotional states people feel when losing a loved one.

“We must let our sorrow have its time because our joy has had its time. It is because we knew, loved,

and delighted in our relationships we remember today that we feel such sorrow in their endings. Our joy came first. Because of the joy, we feel such sorrow. Though the sorrow is strong, we remember our grief. But there will come a day when our joy is greater than our sorrow,” he encouraged service attendees.

Before the closing blessing by Pastor Beight, Victoria Martens read a final reflection: “As we go into 2023, it may not seem like there’s a light bright enough to lead us on this new journey we have and lead us where our futures may be. But it’s there. We just have to look.”

New community police commissioners sworn in

On December 21st, 2022, the City of Cleveland announced that all 13 members of Cleveland’s new Community Police Commission have now been officially sworn in. This action dissolves the Commission established by the Consent Decree in 2015 and replaces it with the reformed Commission passed by voters last November through Issue 24.

Law Director Mark Griffin administered the new commissioners’ oath of office in several ceremonies in December 2022, following their approval and appointment

by Cleveland City Council early in December.

Under oath, each commissioner declared that they will faithfully, honestly, and impartially discharge the duties of the Community Police Commission, officially finalizing the formation of one of the strongest bodies of its kind in the nation.

“In our first year, we made police reform a top priority – and the stage is set for the new Commission to hit the ground running in 2023,” Mayor Justin M. Bibb said.

The Commission has the authority



PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

Saturday, December 17, 2022; Walter Martens & Sons Funeral Home 9811 Denison Ave: The Virgin Mary and St. Nicholas stand under the shadow of the Tree of Remembrance.

to review police discipline and policies and is expected to turn its focus on training and operational priorities, starting with establishing bylaws, selecting a Chair, and nominating an

Executive Director as its first order of business.

Training proposed for the new commissioners is intended to be delivered in partnership with the

framers of issue 23, senior leadership from the Cleveland Division of Police, and experts in civilian oversight. Topics will elevate the voices of victims’

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CUYAHOGA COUNTY ARTS & CULTURE

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amount requested from Neighborhood Connections.

Charna Sherman, a CAC board member, and the former board president, asked for clarification on CAC’s involvement with selecting partners for the community connections program when, according to her, it was the reason Assembly for the Arts was created. That organization, artists have



Cuyahoga Arts Council Executive Director Jill Paulsen

argued, would be naturally suited to disbursing funds to individual artists.

“I do not understand why we use CAC staff time and money when Assembly for Arts should be managing this program,” she said.

Cuyahoga County residents approved the creation of CAC in 2006. A levy extension appeared in 2015, which renewed an existing excise tax for ten additional years. The current levy expires in January 2027.

Grants totaling \$11,755,225 went to 273 county-based organizations through its 2023 General Operating Support, Project Support, and Cultural Heritage programs. The Cleveland Museum of Art received \$931,148, while Playhouse Square and The Cleveland Orchestra each got more than \$1 million. Artist support programs and resident-led arts and culture projects received \$560,500.

The 2023 Support for Artists grants will provide SPACES with \$70,000 for the Urgent Art Fund, \$120,000 to Karamu for the Room in the House Residency, and Julia de Burgos Cultural Arts Center received \$70,000 for Unidos for el Arts. The Assembly for the Arts received \$140,000 to support transformative arts projects to focus on communities that lack art investment and amenities. In previous years, LAND Studio, Cleveland Public Theater, and Center for Performance and Civic Practice received funding but not anymore.

CAC used to receive proposals from the community but not since 2018, according to Sinatra and CAC Executive Director Jill Paulsen. Not all groups and organizations

function as intermediaries and can distribute grants, Paulsen said. The reason has to do with their ability to run the program.

“It’s a special skill set,” said Paulsen. “Not every organization wants to do the work.”

At the meeting, Sherman asked about the annual shortfall – \$140,000 of the \$400,000 – in distributions that have taken place each of the last four years.

“Every year, we set a budget and spend money, and whatever is left is rolled back into the budget,” Paulsen explained without addressing the issue.

In a meeting that was contentious and chaotic, where board members slighted each other in public view, after a full hour, Sherman made a motion to roll over the remaining funds, which were committed but not spent, to Assembly for the Arts, increasing their 2023 grants giving capabilities from \$140,000 to \$280,000.

The motion lost three votes to one.

Maugans watched in disbelief. “This board does not communicate respectfully and clearly, let alone find an agreement to support artists,” she said after the meeting. “This affects their ability to expand the pie for artists, something they repeat in every PR campaign of theirs. They are disrespectful, combative to each other, I have never been to a board meeting like this before.”

County Executive-elect Chris Ronayne will replace two CAC board members, Michele Scott Taylor and Jenita McGowan, when their terms expire on March 31, 2023.

Jill Paulsen was promoted from interim director of CAC to executive director in 2020 after former director Karen Gahl-Mills resigned in 2018.

Editor’s Note: This article first appeared in the *Cleveland Scene*.



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PHOTO BY ERIK AULT

December 10, 2022; Jones Home Neighborhood Holiday Sweater Party at Phunkenship 3135 Sackett Avenue: Veranda L'Ni, Cleveland's tallest drag queen, performs festive favorites.

FAIR LENDING & VITAL COMMUNITIES

continued from page one

which are predominantly white, 80 percent of home sales came with a loan.

"It is a missed opportunity for homeownership in the city because the price is affordable," he said. "And the research shows that as African American population increases, their ability to access home repair loans decreases."

Community Development Corporation (CDCs) in Cleveland and Cuyahoga County count the number of homes built and repaired in a self-appraisal system tied to their funder assessment, including the Cleveland Foundation, Gund Foundation, and St. Luke's Foundation. It's a significant flaw in their reporting system, said Ford. Skewed information favors the CDC.

Ford looked at the community benefits agreements seven banks have with the city and county and compared the dollars they have on deposits from citizens of Cuyahoga County to the loans given to them. Fifth Third Bank had \$32 billion from 2016-2020 but remained consistently low with home repair loans on the Eastside during the same period. Other lenders didn't fare much better.

In a different forum, Zach Germinick, Director of Neighborhood Stabilization at Slavic Village Development, was joined by David Freno, Vice President, Financial Planner for TransitoNext, and John

Lynch, a broker and partner in Keller Williams Citywide realtors. They discussed how outside investors distort the Cleveland rental housing market. Distressed real estate costs less than improving other properties, and with wide profit margins and minimal work, investors find income opportunities in distressed properties, according to Freno.

Opportunity Zones, created by the Federal Government to promote investment in distressed areas, are deferred taxes on financial gains. Investors must qualify with accreditation by an investment institution with an annual salary of more than \$200K for two years or a net worth of \$1M.

"The idea is to maintain investments in the neighborhood," Germinick said. "With minimum entry points well over six figures, it is not for everyone."

Lynch explained that, from his experience, investors are from Cleveland. People will fix up rental properties for income, while others flip them for a profit. As former Cleveland City Councilman from 1974 - 86, under Mayors Ralph Perk, Dennis Kucinich, and George Voinovich, Lynch said the housing market was affected negatively by a lack of enforcing housing codes.

"The condition of real estate properties is dependent on enforcing housing codes. The City of Cleveland did not do it back then," he said. "They can do a systematic inspection of homes and improve the condition in

Role of grand juries in Cuyahoga County examined

by Chuck Hoven

In the December 2022 issue of the *Plain Press* in an article titled "Second District Police Community Relations Committee changes name" it was reported that Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Erin Stone of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office promised to get back to the *Plain Press* with data on "what percentage of cases brought to grand juries resulted in charges and prosecution."

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Erin Stone followed up with some data for the *Plain Press*. She said the Prosecutor's Office looked back at four years of data to determine the percentage of cases presented to grand juries that were "true billed" meaning that "an indictment is returned by the Grand Jury."

Here is what the Prosecutor's Office found as relayed by Stone:

"In 2022 to date (mid-December), we've had 9,351 true bills and 145 no bills. Total 9,496 presentments with decision: 98.47% true billed, 1.53% no billed."

"In 2021, we had 9,815 true bills and 114 no bills. Total 9,929 presentments with decision: 98.85% true billed, 1.15% no billed."

"In 2020 (COVID), we had 6,439 true bills and 141 no bills. Total 6,580 presentments with decision: 97.86% true billed, 2.14% no billed."

"In 2019 we had 9,461 true bills and 128 no bills. Total 9,589 presentments with decision: 98.66% true billed, 1.33% no billed."

In presenting the data to the *Plain Press*, Stone explained the high percentages of cases that are "true billed" by the Grand Jury. Stone said, "These percentages may seem eye-popping at first glance, but our office does not present cases to the Grand Jury that we don't feel are sufficient. If we don't think there is probable cause, we reject

the case, and it is not presented to the Grand Jury unless additional evidence is subsequently brought to us. In short, if we are presenting a case, we expect that it will be true billed, or we wouldn't bother presenting it."

At the November 8th meeting of the Second District Policing Committee (reported on in the December *Plain Press*), Stone said that the grand jury is just charged with finding that there is "reasonable suspicion" that a crime was committed. The prosecutor's office, when taking the case to court, has a higher standard to prove to win the case. They must prove to a judge or jury that the defendant is guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt."

She noted that if a case presented to the prosecutor's office is one that prosecutors don't think they can prove "beyond a reasonable doubt," it will be likely rejected by the prosecutor's office and not presented to the grand jury. Stone indicated at the November 8th meeting that such cases may be returned to police detectives to gather more information.

In following up with the *Plain Press* in December, Stone said, "While I don't have numbers on the cases we rejected, I did speak with the supervisor of our Grand Jury Unit, and she told me that 'anecdotally I can say with confidence that rejected cases number in the several hundred every year.'"

Cuyahoga County currently has four grand juries, each with 14 members. The grand jury members are selected from the list of registered voters and the chairperson of each grand jury is selected by a Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Court judge.

A group called Citizens for Grand Jury reform has started a change.org online petition ([https://www.change.org/p/tell-administrative-judge-sheehan-that-cuyahoga-county-needs-grand-](https://www.change.org/p/tell-administrative-judge-sheehan-that-cuyahoga-county-needs-grand-jury-reform-now)

[jury-reform-now](https://www.change.org/p/tell-administrative-judge-sheehan-that-cuyahoga-county-needs-grand-jury-reform-now)) calling for reducing "prosecutorial bias in how grand juries are trained; reducing wrongful indictments by improving grand jury access to evidence; and reducing racial disparities within the indictment process."

In calling for reform, Citizens for Grand Jury Reform says, "Indictment by Grand Jury is where all felonies begin their legal process. Because a majority of defendants (over 95%) accept plea bargains after indictment, most accused citizen never see a jury of their peers. A 14-person panel of citizens called-up through the jury pool, the Grand Jury, spends two days a week for four months reviewing allegations to determine whether there is enough prosecutorial evidence to indict (i.e. proceed with legal action). There is no voice for the defendant."

The group's detailed online petition makes a number of recommendations for Grand Jury reform including calling upon the State of Ohio to update and implement the changes recommended in 2016 by now retiring Ohio Supreme Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor's **Task Force to Examine Improvements in the Ohio Grand Jury System**. Citizens for Grand Jury Reform calls upon Cuyahoga County to implement the recommendations of Chief Justice O'Connor's task force even if the State of Ohio does not.

Citizens for Grand Jury Reform says its position statement is endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio's Northeast Ohio Action Team; the Ohio Student Association; the Ohio Organizing Collaborative; the Northeast Ohio Chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice and Professor Emeritus of Law Lewis Katz. **Editor's Note:** Community leaders or organizations wishing to endorse the petition can send an email to: citizens4grandjuryreform@gmail.com.

Saint Paul's Community Church installs new pastor

On November 13th, St. Paul's Community Church at 4427 Franklin Boulevard held an installation service and installed Emily Culp-Ashby as its new pastor. Culp-Ashby has served as "dedicated" pastor for over a year.

general. But it is not being done."

Germinick said distressed properties carry a negative connotation. With federal and state regulations from the financial advising and realtor industry, compliance varies, opening the door for bad practices.

Unlicensed real estate brokers flood the market for cash deals even while the real estate and appraisal industry, licensed by the state of Ohio, Division of Real Estate, tries to protect legitimate transactions. Wholesale options happen regularly in Cleveland, with buyers promising cash for houses in less than 30 days.

"Unlicensed real estate brokers will form a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), advertise your property for a higher price than they paid, and then sell the LLC," said Lynch. "It creates a problem for all of us in the industry."

Charles Bromley, the founder of Ohio Fair Lending Coalition, led a forum on Tenant Rights: A New Generation with Mike Foley, Former Executive Director of Cleveland Tenants Organization; Josiah Quarles, Director of Organizing and Advocacy, NEOCH (NE Ohio Coalition for Homeless); and Ronald James, Former Cuyahoga County Prosecutor, and Morelands Group Organizer.

James Boyle and Mary Boyle, a former Cuyahoga County Commissioner, are tenants at 12701 Shaker Boulevard, a multi-story apartment building with severe mechanical and structural issues, resulting in residents living without heat during the winter of 2021-22. AMG Management from New York

City, reportedly owners of the building, also own two additional properties at 12500 Shaker Boulevard and 12600 Shaker Boulevard.

"None of the apartments had heat last year. Most have heat this year, but not everyone. I had black mold in my apartment," said James Boyle. "The owners have gone to extraordinary lengths not to be identified by us,"

The current owners took over the property in January 2022. They plan to make cosmetic changes to increase the occupancy rate and rent, reported James, then sell it at a profit.

"They bought the property very cheaply and want the new owners to take care of the major repairs," he said. "We had a property manager and three maintenance people. The owners fired two of them, and now we have one maintenance person for three buildings. Packages from FedEx and UPS have piled up for four or five weeks without letting us know. Thefts and vandalism have increased. We have no security."

James pleaded for more media attention to help tenants organize.

Dennis Keating, an emeritus professor in the Department of Urban Studies at Cleveland State University, who has written widely on housing, neighborhood development, and urban planning, moderated a panel on the impact of the 2022 midterm elections. Panelists were Sarah Saadian, Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Field Organizing at the National Low Income Housing Coalition, and Jo Ingles, who covers politics and the Ohio government for the Ohio Public

Radio and Television Statehouse News Bureau. Professor of Political Science and Director of the Community Research Institute at Baldwin-Wallace University Dr. Thomas Sutton rounded out the conversation.

"Every statewide Republican officeholder that was up for election this year won," said Ingles. "Republicans also took over Ohio Supreme Court."


Saadian shared information about the US Congress, with Republicans holding the majority while the Democrats remain in control in the Senate. She said committee leadership changes are likely a positive development for Democrats.

Dr. Sutton said as the population gets older and whiter in the suburbs and more conservative, the Republican Party gains in strength. Democrats are branded politically as bicoastal and elite, with very little messaging to counter that image.

"Democrats need to look at the messaging and build new coalitions in rural and small-town areas," he said. "And immigration plays a part in the political dynamics of Ohio."

South Euclid Community Services Director Keith Benjamin addressed fair housing and links to public health disparities in a panel discussion with experts from the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Cleveland Department of Health, and Ryan White Planning Council.

Cleveland State University Levin College of Public Affairs and Education presented the conference.



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Start 2023 right with help from Legal Aid

by **Tonya Sams**

It's time to enjoy the holiday season! 2022 is almost over, but it's never too early to start getting your affairs in order for the new year and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland can help!

Legal Aid has been offering free civil legal services to those with low incomes (up to 200% federal poverty guideline) since 1905 – the fifth oldest legal aid organization in the United States. Legal Aid not only serves residents in Cuyahoga but also in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain counties.

Call Legal Aid if you need help with: • **Housing:** foreclosure; eviction; landlord/tenant issues; utilities; public housing • **Work:** unemployment compensation; IRS tax issues; sealing criminal records; securing a valid ID or professional license • **Money:** loans (school, payday, auto, debt); public benefits (food stamps, energy assistance, cash assistance, supplemental security income); bankruptcy • **Family:** domestic violence; divorce; custody;

immigration; education; estate planning • **Health:** medical bill collection; access to medical records; Medicare and Medicaid; marketplace tax credits and penalties

Legal Aid provides assistance with civil legal issues and cannot assist with applications for benefits or criminal cases.

Legal Aid attorneys provide one on one consultation at Brief Advice Clinics and represent clients at court and administrative hearings. Attorneys also go into the community to educate residents regarding their rights and the services that are available to prospective clients.

Legal Aid helps clients like Deja (name changed to protect privacy). Deja made her rental payments on time each month – until the pandemic hit. She had to change jobs and lost a significant amount of income as she struggled to find childcare for her daughter, who was no longer going to school in-person.

She fell behind in her rent and soon received an eviction notice. She also owed increasing late fees which were snowballing at \$25 per day.

Once connected with Legal Aid, an attorney helped Deja apply for rent assistance through CHN Housing Partners, and her application was approved. Deja's attorney was then able to negotiate with her landlord to accept that money as back pay plus three months of future rent payments.

Need help? Call Legal Aid at 888-817-3777 during normal business hours or apply online 24/7 at laslev.org/contact/. When speaking with a Legal Aid intake specialist be sure to have income information and necessary documentation related to your legal issue on hand.

To request an outreach/education event or materials for your community group, email: outreach@laslev.org.

Tonya Sams is the Development and Communications Assistant for The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.



PHOTO BY CHUCK HOVEN

Tuesday, November 22, 2022; Cleveland Municipal School District Board Business Meeting, Halle School, 7901 Halle: Cleveland Metropolitan School District Chief Executive Officer Eric Gordon tries his hand at pickleball.

SCHOOL BOARD

continued from page 2

response to Freeman. Gordon's response stated "Mr. Alfred Fenderson was recommended to the District by the Cleveland Building & Construction Trades Council and was selected by the hiring committee. Mr. Fenderson has completed the required pre-employment activities and will begin his position at Max Hayes on Monday, December 12, 2022."

Freeman's second question asked concerned whether the school district had sufficient security staffing. The letter in the minutes dated December 9, 2022, stated: "As of the date of this correspondence, the district has 118 safety and security officers which allows us to staff at least one officer at each school building. However, the budget the Board approved in June 2022 authorized a total of 181 safety and security officers, leaving 63 vacancies. At the December 13, 2022 Board Business Meeting, the Board will be hiring two additional fulltime officers and 1 additional part time officer. We are continuing to recruit and hire officers and will also be replicating our internal Ohio Peace officer Training Academy (OPATA) again in February as an additional method of increasing our security personnel."

The December 13, 2022 meeting of the Board of Education at Warner Girls' Leadership Academy gave Freeman another opportunity to again address the security question.

Prior to Freeman speaking at the public comment section of the meeting, a staff member from Marion C. Seltzer School at W. 98th and Madison called upon the Board of Education to give the school a fulltime security guard. The staff member reported on a chaotic scene outside the school at closing time when the school's part time security guard had already left for the day. The staff member said the monthly market at the school was in session, so food distribution was taking place while school was letting out. School staff members asking cars to move on were verbally abused, a crossing guard got stomped on, and a fight was taking place outside the school. The staff member also expressed the frustrations of Marion Seltzer staff members whose cars had been broken into while school was in session.

Following the comments from the Marion Seltzer staff member, Freeman again inquired about security in the school system. CEO Gordon said given the difficulties in hiring security personnel, he did not anticipate major improvements in staffing levels in the first few months of the new year.

Gene Tracy also asked some security questions. He asked the School District to provide him with the number of cars that had been stolen from school lots since the beginning of the school year, how many had been broken into, and how many had catalectic converters stolen.

Tracy then noted that the minutes showed that the Comprehensive Extracurricular Activities Plan of the school district had once again been shortchanged by the City of Cleveland. An agreement between the City of Cleveland and the Cleveland Metropolitan School District passed by Cleveland City Council on August 10, 2022 again shortchanged the school district. The deal allocated only \$950,000 for the current school year.

Tracy noted that at every school board meeting since 2010 he has brought up the promise made to the Cleveland school children and Cleveland voters that the school district would be held harmless to the property tax exemption given to the Browns Stadium. In 1995 the stadium was given the property tax exemption lobbied for by Cleveland politicians. Cleveland leaders promised that \$2 million per year would be set aside from three new taxes to fund afterschool programs so the school system would be compensated for the loss of property tax

dollars it would have received from the stadium. That promise was kept through 2009. Then the Jackson Administration dropped the annual amount by \$1 million dollars, shifting more dollars to the repair of the Cleveland Browns stadium.

The agreement published in the minutes indicates that the school district needs to provide preliminary program evaluation information to the City of Cleveland for the 2022-23 school year on or about March 1, 2023, and final information by July 1, 2023.

This clause provides an opportunity for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District staff and the Cleveland Municipal School Board to advocate once again for full funding of \$2 million a year that was initially promised for the Comprehensive Extracurricular Activities Program. Previous evaluations of the program show that students who participate in the afterschool extracurricular programs have better school atten-

dance than their nonparticipating peers. School attendance is a key factor in improving academic performance. The agreement calls for the Cleveland Metropolitan School District, Cleveland City Council, and Mayor Justin Bibb's Administration to come to an agreement on the funding of the extracurricular programs for the 2023-24 school year following the program evaluation.

COMMUNITY BOARD

continued from page 2

Social Security benefits. Consumer Affairs is advising businesses who receive these or other scam letters: Do not call the toll-free number provided in the letter. Report the scam to Consumer Affairs by calling 216-443-7226 or by emailing a copy of letter to consumeraffairs@cuyahogacounty.us. Remember that only scammers will request payment in retail gift cards, money wires or bitcoin. Government agencies do accept these payments. Business owners who wish to check their tax status can contact the Ohio Department of Taxation at 1-800-282-1780. The Cuyahoga County Treasury Tax Services Department can be reached at 216-443-7420. Learn more about scams at cuyahogacounty.us/scamsquad.

EDUCATION

LAKE ERIE INK TEEN ANTHOLOGY: Be part of Lake Erie Ink's seventh published anthology of teen writing. Follow the prompts or create your own piece to align with the theme: Keys & Locks. Submissions open to grades 9-12 and must connect to the theme. Editors are accepting fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual art. Multiple submissions accepted. **Submissions due by January 15.** For more information or to submit an entry visit: lakeerieink.org/teen-book-project.

ENVIRONMENT

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN: The Northeast Ohio Area-wide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is developing a regional climate action plan for Northeast Ohio. The *Climate Action Plan* will integrate local initiatives and identify opportunities

to develop programs and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience, and enhance equity at the regional scale. **Public Engagement Meeting/Listening Sessions** will be held at Cuyahoga County Community College, Jerry Sue Thornton Center, 2500 East 22nd Street on January 10, 2023, from 5:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. and through a live YouTube feed. The following link will be live for viewing the session on January 10th: **YouTube Link:** <https://youtu.be/oe-BmsO0-mo> Residents will have the chance to help shape and frame the plan by providing feedback during the climate mitigation and adaptation strategy phases of the engagement process and work together to reach a low carbon future that supports the national goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. Stay connected and visit eneo2050.com for updates and engagement activities.

HEALTH

JANUARY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: If you suspect someone is experiencing a mental health crisis or is contemplating suicide, consider reaching out to them with empathy and understanding. Call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988. Dial 911 if it is an actual emergency. The Jason Foundation is another available resource. The Jason Foundation is dedicated to the awareness and prevention of suicide through educational programs and provides tools and resources to identify and assist those who are at-risk. For more information on helping your friends and loved ones who are suffering with a mental illness, please visit www.jasonfoundation.com. **COVID -19 TESTS:** As COVID-19 cases rise, it's important to stay safe this win-

ter. Each U.S. household can now order 4 COVID-19 at-home tests shipped straight to their door at no cost. **All you need to do is visit COVIDtests.gov** and enter your contact information and mailing address. At-home tests, or «self-tests,» give rapid results and can be taken anywhere, regardless of your vaccination status or whether or not you have symptoms. **Visit CDC.gov** to learn when to test yourself, how to use an at-home test, and what your test results mean.

LIBRARIES

FREE AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) WORKSHOPS at the Jefferson Branch of the Cleveland Public Library, 850 Jefferson Avenue, on Tuesdays February 7, 14, 21 and 28 from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Once the link is activated on January 10th, people 18 and up can sign up at: <https://cpl.libcal.com/event/9720845>. Those signing up early will

receive a PowerPoint via email so they can practice ahead of time if they wish.

FAMILY CIRCLE TIME: South Branch Library, Scranton at Clark Avenue, every Thursday at 5 p.m. in the Children's Room Main Floor. Stories, songs and fingerplay. Children ages – 0 -11 years.

CLEVELAND PUBLIC LIBRARY WEST PARK CAMPUS, 3805 W. 157th, will reopen on Saturday, January 7th.

VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO SERVE AS GREETERS OR TAX PREPARERS with the Cuyahoga EITC Coalition at the Gordon Square Arcade (6516 Detroit Ave.) This important service helps hardworking residents receive their full tax refund. No prior experience is necessary – training is provided. If you are interested, visit refundohio.org or call/text Emily at 216.200.6704.

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WAGE THEFT

continued from page one

The Ordinance is a victory for the advocacy group Guardians for Fair Work and organizer Nora Kelley, who have been lobbying City officials to deliver wage-theft protections for Cleveland workers since last year.

“This is an important first step at making clear that we have public policies supporting workers,” said Kelley. “Seating the Fair Employment Wage Board within 180 days of passage of the Ordinance is key to its enforcement.”

Businesses seeking City contracts or financial assistance will report to the Fair Employment Wage Board, a seven-member board meant to monitor the living wage ordinance. It will include two members from labor, two from business, one community representative, one from the Mayor’s office, and one from City Council. Mayor Bibb will make all appointments except for the City Council seat.

City Council and the Bibb administration need to pass a 2023 budget that provides the Fair Employment Wage Board with the financial resources to implement the regulations before the Ordinance can take effect.

David Kelley, a Guardians for Fair Work follower and one of more than thirty supporters to attend the final City Council meeting of the year at City Hall, said wage theft disproportionately affects people working for minimum wage.

“Minimum wage is not a living wage to start with, and then lose some of it though wage theft is stunning.”

Policy Matters Ohio reports that in the Fiscal Year 2017, food service, retail, construction, healthcare, and hotels were the top five culprits of wage theft, accounting for 14,523 cases and 125,716 affected workers between them. Childcare services, janitorial services, and temporary help also made the top ten list.

Ohio ranked second in the share of low-wage workers reporting wages below the legal minimum wage. Six wage and hour agents monitor labor practices for over 5.5 million workers.

Under the Safe Harbor rule of the Revenue Act of 1978, a company can identify its workers as independent contractors. It can exempt employers from treating workers as employees. Companies that operate with the Safe Harbor rule do not need to



Monday, December 5, 2022; Cleveland City Hall Rotunda, Cleveland City Hall, 601 Lakeside Avenue: Members of Guardians for Fair Work pose for a group photo in front of the Christmas tree.

PHOTO BY BRUCE CHECEFSKY

pay into Social Security, Medicare, unemployment insurance, and workers’ compensation insurance, which can result in the stealing of billions of dollars from workers, governments, and the public, according to a study released by Yale University. The rules governing overtime protections are outdated and difficult to enforce. Even while employers face higher penalties for committing wage theft, compliance rates remain low as the odds of getting caught remain small.

Major US corporations like Halliburton, G4S Wackenhut, and Circle-K stores are some of the worst offenders, which the US Department of Labor records show, and have collectively taken more than \$22 million from their employees since 2005.

The Biden administration recently issued a proposal that clarifies when workers are independent contractors or employees with the full minimum wage, overtime, and other protections provided under the Fair Labor Standards Act. The proposal directs employers

to consider whether a worker is an employee or a contractor, whether the work requires special skills, the degree of permanence of the relationship between worker and employer, and the investment a worker makes, such as car payments. Misclassifying workers as independent contractors deny those workers protections under federal labor standards, promotes wage theft, allows certain employers to gain an unfair advantage over businesses, and hurts the economy.

The Wage Theft Prevention and Wage Recovery Act introduced in US Senate in 2019 provides employees with regular paystubs and final payment for uncompensated work hours within 14 days of employee termination. Employers must also allow employees access to wage records. The bill proposes a civil penalty of \$2,000 for the first violation of overtime or minimum wage laws and \$10,000 for each subsequent violation. It increases wages for workers to triple the amount owed, up from double

under the existing law, among other provisions. It makes class-action suits against employers for lost wages easier by automatically including all employees in the lawsuits unless they opt-out.

In December 2022, the US Department of Labor recovered \$370,194 in back wages and liquidated damages from the owners of two restaurants in Los Angeles and Pasadena that illegally denied overtime wages to 54 workers. The agency recovered \$1M for 77 care workers employed by Seattle-area adult family home providers who worked overtime to ensure the well-being and daily needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Over \$500K in back wages was recovered for 227 workers of a Panama City Beach hotel staffing agency after denying them full wages and benefits when the employer misclassified them as independent contractors.

Justin Strekal, Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus (CCPC) Steering Committee Member and Organizer

with Guardians for Fair Work, addressed a packed City Council chamber before the vote. “There are over 250,000 documented cases of wage theft every year in Ohio. An average victim loses 24% of their take-home, which is over \$2,900 in Cleveland if they stay on the job for a full year,” said Strekal. “I want to thank the City Council for their vote of support and to let you know that we will be back next year to talk about how we expand upon protection for Cleveland workers.”

Under Ohio law, an employee can file a minimum wage or unpaid wages complaint with the Ohio Department of Commerce. The employee should complete the minimum wage complaint form and provide it to the Department Division of Industrial Compliance, Bureau of Wage & Hour Administration. Here is a link: https://com.ohio.gov/static/documents/dico-MINIMUM_WAGE_COMPLAINT.pdf.

ADAMHS Board received State Opioid Response dollars to install five Naloxone vending machines and 447 emergency access Naloxone cabinets

The Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services (ADAMHS) Board of Cuyahoga County received State Opioid Response funds in the amount of \$1,148,724.75 to increase harm reduction efforts in Cuyahoga County aimed to reduce overdose fatalities.

The grant allowed for the purchase of five naloxone vending machines, four of which will also include other harm reduction kits such as safe sex, wound care, and sharps containers. It also allowed for the purchase of 447 emergency access naloxone cabinets that can be installed in public places to increase access for bystander overdose rescue.

“Harm reduction efforts, like public access to naloxone in vending machines and emergency access naloxone cabinets, save lives. The ADAMHS Board doesn’t condone drug use, but we want to make sure people are alive to get the help they need,” said Scott Osiecki, CEO of the ADAMHS Board. “It is important for the community to know that mental illness and addictions are biological brain disorders that require treatment. We want people to have that chance to get treatment, to live in

recovery and that is why we continue to expand harm reduction tools.”

Five naloxone vending machines were installed across Cleveland, in partnership with The Centers/Circle Health, Murtis Taylor Health and Human Services System and the MetroHealth System at the following locations: The Centers/Circle Health: 12201 Euclid Avenue; The Centers Gordon Square: 5209 Detroit Avenue; The Centers East: 4400 Euclid Avenue; Murtis Taylor: 13422 Kinsman Road; and MetroHealth Main Campus: 2500 Metrohealth Drive.

“The Centers are proud to partner with the ADAMHS Board in the installation of Harm Reduction vending machines at three of our locations to facilitate access to Narcan, HIV testing, and other harm reduction supplies to prevent overdose deaths and the spread of blood borne infections,” said Adriana Whelan, DNP, CNP, Associate Director Primary Care & HIV Primary Care, and Syringe Exchange Services at The Centers.

“This is an innovative approach ensuring that important medicine for opioid overdoses, including fentanyl, is readily available at no cost to our family members, friends and neighbors. The

opioid epidemic is sparing no one and we must act boldly to ensure that we have no cost distribution options for this life saving medication, such as these naloxone vending machines and cabinets, readily available in all of our neighborhoods,” said Lovell Custard, Murtis Taylor Human Services System CEO.

The 447 emergency access naloxone cabinets will contain the overdose reversal drugs Narcan (4 mg) and Kloxxado (8 mg) and can be installed in any public location where an overdose may occur. These boxes and the naloxone to fill them is purchased through this grant funding from a vendor, OAR Systems,

who employs individuals in substance use treatment and recovery to make the boxes. The ADAMHS Board contracted with MetroHealth’s Office of Opioid Safety to install, track, and monitor the use of the boxes.

“These are important tools that have been proven to save lives and help to eventually get people on the road to recovery,” said Dr. Joan Papp, Medical Director of MetroHealth’s Office of Opioid Safety. “Providing the community with 24/7 access is an important part of turning the tide on this epidemic, which has caused so much pain for our families, friends and neighbors.”

Other harm reduction efforts, such

as overdose sensors and buttons and a localized app to help individuals who may be using alone connect with care will be installed and rolled out in the coming months.

Learn more about ADAMHS Board led Harm Reduction effort at www.adamhsc.org/harmreduction.

Interested in obtaining an emergency access naloxone cabinet? Email Madison Greenspan at greenspan@adamhsc.org.

Know a single stall restroom that would benefit from an overdose sensor? Email Madison Greenspan at greenspan@adamhsc.org.

POLICE COMMISSION

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families and educate commissioners on General Police orders and experiences on the frontlines of policing in Cleveland.

Under the Consent Decree, the new Commission replaces the existing one effective immediately. It will be allocated a new budget in 2023, which will include a grant-making

budget of at least 0.5% of the budget for the Division of Police. Current Commission staff will remain in place to ensure a smooth transition until the new Commission makes hiring decisions.

Their first meeting has not yet been scheduled but is expected to be early in 2023.

The new Cleveland Community Police Commissioners are: Dr. John

Adams, 4-year term; Shandra Benito, 2-year term; James M. Chura, 4-year term; Charles Donaldson Jr., 4-year term; Pastor Kyle Early, 2-year term; Alana Garrett-Ferguson, 4-year term; Cait Kennedy, 2-year term; Gregory Reaves, 2-year term; Jan Ridgeway, 4-year term; Piet van Lier, 4-year term; Audrianna Rodriguez, 4-year term; Teri Wang, 2-year term; and Sharena Zayed, 2-year term.