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**CONTACT:** Zaineb Mohammed, [Zaineb@ellabakercenter.org](mailto:Zaineb@ellabakercenter.org), 510-285-8236

**New Report Reveals Negative Health Impacts of Public Housing Policies that Discriminate Against People with Criminal Records**

Oakland, Calif. — **The Long Road Home: Decreasing Barriers to Public Housing for People with Criminal Records** examines how policies that exclude people with criminal records from public housing have long-lasting, damaging impacts on health and equity in communities.

Using the Oakland Housing Authority (OHA) as a case study, this new report investigates the impact of current practices, in particular how OHA considers the presentation of “mitigating circumstances” for people with a criminal history during the application process.

“Housing is fundamental to the health and well-being of families,” said Afomeia Tesfai, the Health Equity Fellow at Human Impact Partners. “Housing instability is associated with increased anxiety, depression, asthma, morbidity and developmental delay in children. Without housing, it becomes challenging for families to have stability in other areas of their lives.”

**Key Findings:**

- Historical policies have created racial disparities in housing and health outcomes.
- Access to stable housing serves as a foundation for families to improve their health, employment and education opportunities, family reunification, and social networks.
- Allowing applicants to present mitigating circumstances in their initial public housing applications would likely result in fewer denials because of a criminal history.

“When my son was released from prison, public housing policies prevented him from being able to live with his child and his child’s mother,” said Reverend Damita Davis-Howard, a leader with Oakland Community Organizations. “He dealt with homelessness, couldn’t be a full-time father to his child, and struggled to find a job. We need to change policies so that people returning from prison can receive the critical support their families can provide.”

The report, which was led by Human Impact Partners in partnership with the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, also offers recommendations on how to create more inclusive housing policies that would decrease racial disparities, improve health outcomes, and reunite families.

**Policy Recommendations:**

- Allow public housing applicants with criminal records to present mitigating circumstances at the beginning of the application process.
- Eliminate the practice of evicting public housing residents for having family members with criminal records live with them, if there is no valid reason for the eviction.
- Track and publicly report the race and ethnicity of public housing applicants and who is screened out of public housing due to their criminal record.

“The criminal justice system targets people of color, low-income people, and the mentally ill,” said Jennifer Kim, Director of Programs at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. “By implementing policies that block access to public housing for people with criminal records, public housing authorities are disproportionately harming groups who are already locked out of too many opportunities.”

Experts and family members of incarcerated individuals are available for interviews. To download a copy of the full report visit: <http://www.humanimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/OHA-HIA-Final-Report.pdf>.

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*The advisory committee for this report included California District 18 State Assemblymember Rob Bonta's Office, East Bay Housing Organizations, the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Oakland Community Organizations, and the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law.*