

## 2024 Senior Advocacy Achievements

Ruby Rodriguez, Hope & Justice Organizer

Over the past year, St. Mary's Center seniors have made remarkable progress in their advocacy efforts, driving meaningful policy discussions and promoting housing equity and community-focused initiatives. Below are their key achievements:

**2024 MLK Celebration & Equity Forum:** St. Mary's Center hosted Alameda County HCD Director Michelle Starratt and Oakland HCD Chief of Staff Chris Norman. This event centered around "Housing on the Ballot," allowing seniors to engage directly with housing leaders to discuss initiatives and solutions aimed at those most in need.



**Advocacy for Acutely Low-Income Housing:** Senior leaders held a meeting with BAHFA Director Kate Hartley to advocate for prioritizing housing for acutely low-income individuals. Their efforts led to the successful inclusion of an annual reporting requirement in BAHFA's policy framework, ensuring that housing production for "extremely low-income" populations is tracked and reported.

**State Legislative Visits and Hunger Advocacy:** Senior advocates traveled to Sacramento to share their stories and advocate for expanded food access. They supported Assemblymember Mia Bonta's AB 1975, "Food as Medicine," emphasizing the need for food stamps and equitable access to healthy food.



**Legislative Recognition of AB 1043:** Seniors expressed their gratitude to Assembly member Isaac Bryan's legislative office, thanking Bryan for authoring the bill AB 1043, which formally designates the term "acutely low-income" to address the urgent housing needs of families earning less than 15% of the Area Median Income. This recognition laid the groundwork for senior advocacy in discussions about the Regional Housing Bond.

**Equity Frameworks and Roundtable Discussions:** Facilitated by Sharon Cornu and Ruby Rodriguez, discussions with Supervisor Nate Miley explored the equity frameworks needed to prioritize housing funding for acutely low-income residents. Seniors also attended an Equity Forum featuring presentations from city and county housing staff.

**Influence Regional & Local Public Commentary on Regional Measure 4:** Senior leaders voiced their support for funding initiatives for extremely low-income residents during public hearings. BAHFA acknowledged their significant contributions, marking a vital regional advocacy success.

**Increased Community Engagement and Voter Registration:** Seniors ramped up voter registration, wrote over 1,300 postcards to voters in Dublin, CA to support Prop 5, and participated in Community Speaker Trainings, reinforcing their civic involvement and influence in policy initiatives.

**Meeting with Jonathan Russell, Housing and Homelessness Director for Alameda County:** Senior advocates engaged in a powerful policy discussion that sparked deeper involvement as key community stakeholders. While Mr. Russell outlined key priorities, seniors pushed for clearer, more relatable explanations, emphasizing the need for policies that reflect their lived experiences. Mr. Russell welcomed the feedback and proposed future collaboration with Jennifer Lucky, H & H Policy and Communications Coordinator, to enhance engagement and make policies more accessible.



**District 5 Supervisor Candidate Forum:** Over 100 seniors from affordable housing communities in Oakland and Alameda County attended this forum, where they voiced their policy priorities to candidates. Key areas emphasized included housing, homelessness, hunger, public safety, and disability justice.

