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Springfield social justice community group Arise receives grant to educate & protect low-income residents from unhealthy mold in homes

Nonprofit E4TheFuture supports Arise's effective community-led work with \$40,000 in funding

SPRINGFIELD, Mass.— The Springfield social justice organization Arise has received a \$40,000 grant from E4TheFuture to expand its work educating residents about the dangers of indoor mold, advocating for implementation of mold-control codes, and providing residents with HEPA air purifiers that can help contain mold spores that aggravate respiratory conditions.

Mold is an allergy and asthma trigger, and it's becoming more common in homes — disproportionately so in communities of color and low-income communities — as the climate heats up.

“In a city that the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America has called the [asthma capital](#) of the nation, air purifiers are only Band-Aids,” said Arise Executive Director Tanisha Arena. “But they are also tools we can use to address one of the many effects of environmental injustice in Springfield while we continue to advocate for better public policies and call out root causes of injustice and inequity, such as structural racism,” Arena said.

Arise was among the organizations that successfully advocated for getting mold added to Massachusetts' Sanitary Code, which establishes minimum health and safety standards for dwellings. Board of Health agents can issue citations for mold and excess moisture — at least in theory.

“In Springfield, implementation is a challenge,” Arena said. “With the E4TheFuture grant, we will keep fighting for code enforcement when landlords neglect mold problems, continue to educate our neighbors, and add to the hundreds of families with asthma diagnoses that we've been able to help by providing air purifiers.”

Arise's community-led work on a variety of justice and equity issues has earned it a reputation for effectiveness that caught E4TheFuture's attention.

“Arise's work is perfectly aligned with E4TheFuture's mission to promote residential energy efficiency and sustainable resource solutions to advance climate goals equitably for all people,” said Pat Stanton, executive director of E4TheFuture.

“Mold is one of the leading adverse health and safety conditions that make it impossible to install energy efficiency measures in existing older homes. Mold in rental properties is a

clear indication of deferred property maintenance and high energy costs that are systemic in low-income communities.”

“When it comes to environmental justice, the people closest to the problems tend to be wisest about the solutions. E4TheFuture is excited to support Arise, and to keep learning from Tanisha and other dedicated community leaders,” Stanton said.

Arise’s efforts encompass intersecting areas of concern for lower-income people in Springfield, including housing, the criminal legal system, and environmental injustice. For example, Arise successfully advocated blocking a planned biomass plant that would burn 1,200 tons of waste wood per day from being built in a low-income community already suffering from high rates of asthma. The biomass company is [suing the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#) in an effort to revive the project.

Other Arise initiatives include collaborating with Livewell Springfield to bring in Community Choice Energy, which enables community-controlled, clean and efficient energy; and opposing Eversource’s proposal to put in a high-pressure natural gas pipeline through environmental justice communities in Springfield and East Longmeadow.

“E4TheFuture approached us, and securing the grant was a fairly easy process,” Arena said. “It was nice to hear ‘we heard about the work you’re doing, and we want to support it.’ ”

About [Arise](#): Arise is a community-led nonprofit in Springfield, Massachusetts. Our mission is to educate, organize, and unite low-income people to know what our rights are, to stand up for those rights, and to achieve those rights; to educate the community at large as to its common interest in social justice for all; to promote involvement in the electoral process, to develop self-esteem, and to teach ourselves to fight oppression in all its manifestations.

About [E4TheFuture](#): E4TheFuture works for clean, efficient and safe energy solutions. A nonprofit organization, we promote energy efficiency, renewables, demand management, energy storage and electric vehicles to advance climate protection and economic fairness. We work to achieve an energy economy that is sustainable, more equitable, lower cost, and resilient.