



Episode 673 | August 26, 2022 | 12:00 PM EST

Ruth Ann Norton
Green and Healthy Homes Initiative
What Success Looks Like

This week IAQradio welcomed Ruth Ann Norton President & CEO of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative for a discussion on healthy homes, the new funding in the Inflation Reduction Act and what a successful organization looks like.

Ruth Ann Norton, President & CEO of the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, joined the organization in 1993 and has led its development into one of the nation's most effective and foremost authorities on healthy housing and its impact on the social determinants of health and racial equity. An expert on lead poisoning prevention, healthy homes and the intersection of climate, energy and health, Ruth Ann directs GHHI's national strategy, policy framework and services to integrate climate, healthcare and healthy housing as a platform for improved health, economic, educational and social outcomes for low-income communities.

She broadened the organization's mission by designing the GHHI comprehensive model in 2009 in partnership with HUD and CDC that is built on a framework of cross-sector collaboration. GHHI works in over 75 partner jurisdictions to implement its model that effectively integrates resources to comprehensively deliver lead hazard reduction, healthy homes, energy efficiency and housing rehabilitation interventions. She has been at the forefront in building the business case for healthcare investments in housing to address the social determinants of health and racial equity.

Ms. Norton serves as a member of: the EPA Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee, the National Leadership Academy for the Public's Health, the National Council of State Housing Agencies' National Advisory Group, the Ohio Asthma Council, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Center for

Population Health Information Technology Advisory Board. She is Chair of the Maryland Lead Poisoning Prevention Commission and is also a federally appointed Liaison Member to the CDC's Lead Exposure and Prevention Advisory Committee. Nuggets mined from today's episode:

Welcome back Ruth Ann, the last time we had you on was in May of 2015 your group had just received an EPA's 2015 National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management award. You were joined during that show with Mark Kravatz of GHII and Larry Zarker of BPI. Let's start with a review of who GHHI is and what your goals are.

Our Mission

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative is dedicated to addressing the social determinants of health and the advancement of racial and health equity through the creation of healthy, safe and energy efficient homes. By delivering a standard of excellence in its work, GHHI aims to eradicate the negative health impacts of unhealthy housing and unjust policies for children, seniors and families to ensure better health, economic and social outcomes for low-income communities of color.

Our Vision

Addressing the Social Determinants of Health and Racial Equity through Healthy Housing.

(From our blog for the 2015 show) Started in Baltimore in 1986 by parents of kids suffering from childhood lead poisoning, your group's mission was to break the link between unhealthy housing and childhood lead poisoning. The group has been highly successful, reducing 98% of lead poisoning in Maryland and 86% nationwide. How did your areas of interest broaden? When testing homes for lead paint our inspectors found many other issues that impacted health such as mold problems and other IAQ issues so the group's interest and reach broadened to include reduction of asthma and improve housing for the low income.

Collaboration with others has been a key part of GHHI's success. GHHI has expanded the number of groups with whom they collaborate to over 1,000. These partners include: state governors, city mayors, nonprofits, utilities, foundations, health departments, hospitals, healthcare systems, universities, etc. (eg. Johns Hopkins,

Habitat for Humanity, HUD, Dept. of Energy, EPA, ProMedica, Blue Cross to name a few).

- Ruth Ann sees GHHI as the catalyst around standards and practice.

Your headquarters is in Baltimore, is your work limited to Baltimore? GHHI is working in Wisconsin, Ohio, Maryland and Michigan, Maine, North Carolina and Delaware. We are starting a pilot whole house project in New Jersey (energy efficiency and decarbonization). We are working in areas of high need in: Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Baltimore and Oakland, CA. We also have active programs in Memphis, Providence (RI), Jackson (MS), Philadelphia and Kansas City.

How many employees does GHHI have? GHHI has a staff of 50. Half of the staff works out of HQ and the other half is scattered among offices in other cities. According to Ruth Ann, GHHI's small staff of 50 personnel punches seriously above its weight. GHHI's primary tool is collaboration. GHHI excels at building and maintaining effective long-standing partnerships.

GHHI is focused on what happens in the home and uses common sense measures to improve housing and improve occupant health. GHHI looks to match assets with gaps. GHHI involved in research, evaluation and implementation.

- Broad impact to improve health.
- Create practices that elevate lives.
- Decarbonization- moving from gas heat to alternatives.

It seems the holistic approach would be a tough sell for instance when someone is concerned about mold issues. How have you been able to get the end users to embrace the holistic approach when maybe all they care about is energy use or lead or mold, etc.? Contractors need to understand the importance a healthy home to improving the health outcomes of occupants. There is a massive opportunity for contractors, as billions of dollars of funding is in the pipeline. Contractors need to provide products and services in alignment with the programs. Lead paint, mold, leaky roofs, stair treads, energy efficiency, ventilation, asthma, weatherization, etc. Contractors are needed to manage entire projects. Subcontractors are needed to

do the work, more workers are needed providing the opportunity for new disadvantaged workers to enter the trades.

Are housing and energy investments part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA)? Yes:

\$369 billion climate and energy.

\$9 billion home energy rebate (for electrifying of low-income housing)

\$4.3 billion tax credits for roof top solar

\$60 billion EPA pollution & climate change, climate justice, low income & wealth

\$1 billion states to develop more energy efficient codes.

Creation of a Green Bank

Environmental Justice

IAQ

Health (cardiac health, brain function)

Your group recently held a webinar to discuss the housing and energy investments in the IRA. Can you give our audience the Cliff Notes from that presentation?

The IRA (Inflation Reduction Act) dwarfs programs put into place by Presidents FDR and Obama. The IRA ensures sustainable work. The IRA can take lessons from the America Recovery Act on how to keep workers working.

- These investments build correct infrastructure. Resulting in employment opportunities and challenges.
- Get potential workers from at risk communities interested in job opportunities. Upskill these workers and bring them into the workplace.
- California boldly outlaws carbon cars.
- Prohibition against building new buildings fueled by gas.
- Once IRA mandates are adopted the market will shift.
- Manufacturers are adapting. (Rocky Mountain Institute)
<https://rmi.org/our-work/buildings/> <https://rmi.org/our-work/building-electrification/>
- Department of Energy is moving from gas to electric.

Under IRA contractors can depend on availability of larger numbers of projects.

- Recruit client base who wants services.
- Employees are needed to do the work and earn money.
- All this happens locally.

Training-

Under IRA broader distribution of training centers will be needed along with ongoing training + apprenticeship training.

- Federal grants require enforcement of lead rules.
- Ask the Experts- GHHI seeks experts to advise on best practices.

In-Home Care asthma reduction using best practices have proven to provide improvement of health saving calculation statistics.

<https://www.standardsofcare.org/understanding-care/types/in-home/>

Ruth Ann is concerned about the high volume of funding coming soon and the lack of good standards based upon evidenced based science and demonstrated efficacy. For instance, standards enforcement by state and city in Baltimore moved the market. Communities with the best standards and enforcement achieve the best outcomes.

Success Stories:

- <https://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/news/success-stories/>

Healthy Homes Toolkit:

- <https://www.greenandhealthyhomes.org/virtual-healthy-homes-toolkit/>

Inflation Reduction Act Includes New Funds for Climate Resiliency and Improved Indoor Air Quality in Homes

- <https://nchh.org/2022/08/inflation-reduction-act-includes-new-funds-for-climate-resiliency-and-improved-indoor-air-quality-in-homes/>

The GHHI is a force multiplier adding more effectiveness to other groups and getting maximum resources into low-income homes to improve lives.

RoundUp

Z-Man- I'm concerned that the IRA tries to do too much too fast and that this will have a negative effect on our economy. Move to solar power and windmills benefits our adversary China by requiring raw materials which China controls.

Other countries such as China and India won't comply. US efforts won't change the climate.

Ruth Ann Norton- Was an economist in college. Experts say that IRA is budget neutral. The Amazons need to pay their share. New areas of development the government often goes first (e.g. computers, pharma). We need to make up for decades of deferred maintenance. Need to use evidence and science to create standards and then enforce them. We need to fund investments and track outcomes. A big effort is necessary for the environment and public health.

Ruth Ann Norton- Invites our audience to attend the GHHI Executive Leadership Institute in April 2023.

Z-Man signing off