

# Making Homes Healthier

Investing in energy efficiency delivers substantial financial and environmental benefits. Energy efficiency can also improve resident health. Improvements to insulation, air sealing, heating equipment, and ventilation can improve indoor air quality by reducing contaminants like mold and protect residents from extreme temperatures. Indoor air contaminants have been linked to chronic respiratory illnesses such as asthma. Exposure to extreme temperatures can result in cardiac failure, stroke, and respiratory infections.



*Berta Zometa says she's able to save more money now that her energy costs have dropped after her apartment received efficiency upgrades through a utility energy efficiency program. Photo by Marcela Gara, Resource Media.*

The health benefits of energy efficiency are more pronounced for individuals with preexisting health conditions. Chronic illnesses such as asthma disproportionately impact racial minorities: black children are diagnosed with asthma at twice the rate of white children and the rate of death caused by asthma is nearly three times as high for black individuals as compared to white individuals.

Energy efficiency retrofits also provide an opportunity to improve housing conditions through the use of healthy building materials. There can be risks to resident health from insulation and air-sealant materials that contain persistent, bioaccumulative, and/or toxic chemicals. Fortunately, there are solutions thanks to innovative new products and improved versions of well-known products coming to market. Energy Efficiency for All has a team of experts dedicated to accelerating the encouraging trend toward the use of healthier building materials.

Energy Efficiency for All (EEFA) unites people from diverse sectors and backgrounds, including housing, energy efficiency, environmental, health, and community leaders, to collectively make multifamily homes healthy and affordable through energy and water efficiency.

## Priorities

- 1** Increase awareness about the health benefits of energy efficiency.
- 2** Improve indoor air quality and resident health through use of non-toxic building materials.
- 3** Ensure that utility regulators understand and properly value health benefits when evaluating the cost-effectiveness of energy efficiency interventions.
- 4** Increase the amount of utility energy efficiency funding that supports health and safety improvements to housing.
- 5** Encourage healthcare providers and payers to invest in energy efficiency improvements.