



President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships

STRENGTHENING EFFORTS TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITY AND END POVERTY:

Recommendations of the President's Advisory Council
for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships
to Address Poverty and Inequality

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the President's Advisory Council for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships would like to extend our gratitude and thanks to both groups who advised us in various ways and groups who have worked with us over the years to help enhance our knowledge and experience of working in communities.

In particular, we want to thank Taylor Prochnow, Cynthia Woodside, Marlysa D. Gamblin, Jayne Bigelsen, Dan Nejfelt, Hanna Dershowitz and their respective organizations that gave staff time to support the development of these recommendations; Third Way, Bread for the World, Covenant House, Faith in Public Life and Jewish Council for Public Affairs. We also want to thank all of the individuals who spoke to the Council about their work to address poverty, both inside the Administration and in communities.

Among our Council members, we are especially appreciative of those who provided leadership to the Council and to the chairs of subcommittees created by the Council. Those individuals included: Rev. David Beckmann, Preeti Bansal, Lanae Erickson Hatalsky, Pastor Michael McBride, Alexie Torres-Fleming, our Council Chair, Rev. Jennifer Butler, and our Designated Federal Officer, Ben O'Dell.

We want to thank Melissa Rogers for her leadership of this Council as Executive Director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, as well as the staff of the White House Office and Federal Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships for their leadership and support of the Council and our work.

ABOUT THE COUNCIL

The President's Advisory Council on Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships brings together leaders and experts in fields related to the work of faith-based and neighborhood organizations to make recommendations to government entities on improving partnerships. The Council is charged with:

- Identifying best practices and successful modes of delivering social services;
- Evaluating the need for improvements in the implementation and coordination of public policies relating to faith-based and neighborhood organizations; and
- Making recommendations to the President and the Administration on changes in policies, programs, and practices.

After conducting its research and deliberation, the Council submits a written report of its recommendations to the President.

The directive for the present Council focuses on strategies the government should employ to reduce poverty and inequality and to create opportunity for all. These strategies include changes in policies, programs, and practices that affect the delivery of services by faith-based and community organizations and the needs of low-income and other underserved persons.

After convening and deciding how to organize our work at our first public meeting in November, the council presented recommendations to the Administration on a rolling basis through meetings and conference calls held for the past year. This was in recognition of these recommendations being provided to the President and his Administration toward the end of his term. This final report is a culmination of those recommendations, some of which the Administration has already taken steps to implement.

Reverend Jennifer Butler
Faith in Public Life
Council Chair

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore
International Community
Baptist Churches

Preeti Bansal
MIT Media Lab & Social
Emergence Corporation

Reverend David Beckmann
Bread for the World

Reverend Traci D. Blackmon
The United Church of Christ

Kara Bobroff
Native American Community
Academy

Rachel Held Evans
Christian Blogger, Author

Rabbi Steve Gutow
New York University

Reverend Adam Hamilton
United Methodist Church of
the Resurrection

Aziza Hasan
NewGround: Muslim Jewish
Partnership for Change

Lanae Erickson Hatalsky
Third Way

David Jeffrey
Salvation Army

Naseem Kourosh
U.S. Bahá'í Office of Public
Affairs

Dr. Jo Anne Lyon
Wesleyan Church

Pastor Michael McBride
People Improving
Communities through
Organizing

Nipun Mehta
ServiceSpace

Dr. Rami Nashashibi
Inner-City Muslim Action
Network

Kevin Ryan
Covenant House

**Reverend Dr. Gabriel A.
Salguero**
National Latino Evangelical
Coalition

Barbara Satin
National LGBTQ Task Force

Dr. Stephen Schneck
The Catholic University of
America

Manjit Singh
Sikh American Legal
Defense and Education Fund

Alexie Torres-Fleming
Access Strategies Fund

Deborah Weinstein
Coalition on Human Needs

All members of the President's Advisory Council for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships were appointed and served in their personal capacities, not in their capacities as representatives of their employers or any other organization or entity with which they are affiliated. Naseem Kourosh was honored to be appointed to the Council in May 2016 and served as a member of the Council, but she abstained from voting on the recommendations. All other Council members voted to make the following recommendations to the President and his Administration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty and inequality are not abstract problems. As leaders who are called to serve families in struggling communities, we see poverty in the faces of friends and neighbors—children, grandmothers, uncles, aunts, colleagues, and ministry partners. They are loved ones whose sorrows we have shared as they struggle against systems that work against them rather than for them, especially when they face health challenges or job loss, come from communities of color, are native peoples, or are marginalized because of sexual orientation or gender identity. As we approached the task of making recommendations to the President to increase opportunity and reduce inequality, these are the faces we kept foremost in our minds and hearts.

As faith and community leaders, we approached this task with an acknowledgement of our rich history and experience with people who seek the opportunity to thrive. Across the country and around the world, our communities are on the front lines advocating for social justice and directly providing education, healthcare, and social services to many at-risk populations. Most importantly, faith and community leaders hold up for all a vision for the common good measured by what our nation does for those most in need. For all of these reasons, faith and community-based organizations and leaders recognize the critical role of government in anti-poverty initiatives that promote greater economic equality.

Solving the growing range of complex and interwoven problems related to poverty and inequality requires more than an investment of financial resources. Individuals and families in poverty suffer from material deprivation, but also from disproportionate rates of stress, emotional harm and trauma, fractured relationships, and diminished social ties and networks. Discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and other characteristics exacerbates these problems. The cumulative impact of these deprivations impedes the ability of these individuals to recover from material poverty by breaking down their natural resilience. Government resources must therefore sow the seeds of community-based efforts to heal and unlock communities' and individuals' inner assets triggering and sustaining lasting external and internal transformations. We should remember that capital is not just financial; it is social, informational, experiential, spiritual, emotional, natural, and cultural¹.

We have seen firsthand how poverty is caused in part by historical harm done to specific populations, including Native American communities and communities of color. Our broken criminal justice system and the failure to address lead poisoning illustrate how our laws, systems, and practices can perpetuate racial inequality and poverty from one generation to the next. For the sake of our collective well-being, both spiritual and communal, we must seek to repair this breach, confront our history, and confess and change those practices that have enabled the benefit of some at the expense of others. We are, after all, our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

The Council's recommendations are particularly attentive to the following principles:

- Poverty and extreme inequality are social ills with deep spiritual and communal implications. They not only perpetuate lack of opportunity, but they also demean human dignity, crush the human spirit, and sever family and communal bonds, ultimately resulting in the undermining of democratic institutions. They erode families, communities, and nations by pulling us apart and wasting the gifts of our citizens who are thwarted from achieving and contributing.
- Focusing solely on charity and service provision is inadequate. Poverty and inequality must be understood as structural problems. Efforts to substantially alleviate poverty must address underlying economic, social, and racial justice issues in order for our policies to reflect our values.

- Because these social ills of poverty and inequality are so complex, government resources are critical. At the same time, it is critical for these resources to be channeled in a manner that encourages partnerships within local ecosystems of place-based actors, including individuals, faith-based and neighborhood groups, service providers, and public institutions. Government can go beyond mere “delivery” of services by building deep relationships with the communities and individuals it serves, supporting the growth of social ties and horizontal peer-to-peer support systems, fostering responsive problem-solving within and among communities and individuals, and working for holistic solutions to well-being and success.
- Addressing economic poverty and inequality will require interventions that unlock the inner assets and social capital of individuals and communities who suffer under the weight of poverty. When members of the public connect with a federal program, they should experience potentially transformational interactions that tap into and leverage their inner assets, leading to sustainable change.

Our collective efforts over the past few decades have demonstrated that we can eliminate poverty in this country if we commit ourselves to doing so. We must draw on these past successes while renewing our present efforts. National and global leaders increasingly recognize that poverty is not inevitable. Through the course of our meetings as a Council, we heard numerous examples of programs effectively addressing challenges for low-income populations and transforming communities. From creating deep partnerships within Promise Zones, to addressing childhood obesity and drastically reducing veteran homelessness, the Administration has implemented a rich and diverse body of programs and policies that reduce poverty and increase opportunity. These programs are building trust and accountability through collaboration in local communities where trust has been broken. In all these efforts, we can point to innovative programs that have resulted in rapid progress against poverty in the United States.

In short, government works, and is working, to increase opportunity and end poverty.

Through the recommendations that follow, government, working in partnership with faith-based and community partners, can increase opportunities to generate more equitable and just systems so that all are included in the prosperity of America.

The Council recommends the Administration take the following actions to address underlying systemic and historic causes of inequality as well as strengthen existing anti-poverty programs. These recommendations are grouped into three sets of ideas related to increasing opportunity and reducing inequality in America.

Recommendations to Increase Economic Opportunity

- Implement the Sustainable Development Goals in America, including a commitment to end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.
- Take action on a variety of Administrative activities that would have significant positive impact on low income communities and populations -- from finalizing regulations on child support to making a variety of policy changes related to youth homelessness.
- Act to prevent and relieve lead poisoning, specifically in federally assisted housing, and assist families whose children have been poisoned to move to a safe unit.
- Create a cross-agency working group that would coordinate and increase awareness of federal efforts to address poverty and inequality in America.
- Pursue opportunities for bipartisan action and dialogue on poverty and opportunity.

Recommendations to Address Race, Justice, and Poverty

- Help law enforcement agencies and communities strengthen accountability, trust, and collaboration.
- Take steps to rectify injustices by expanding grants of clemency in the form of commutations, pardons, and expungements, and make it easier for offenders to apply and qualify for these various forms of relief.
- Examine and address racial equity through federal agencies.
- Commit to increasing engagement with community, national, and international forums that promote racial reconciliation and restoration.

Recommendations to Strengthen Government Approaches and Programs for Addressing Poverty and Inequality

- Recognize and address the emotional harm, trauma, and diminished social ties experienced by individuals, families, and communities in poverty, in addition of their material needs.
- Highlight and solidify progress made by relational approaches to addressing poverty and inequality, in which deep relationships are fostered between frontline service professionals and those whom anti-poverty programs are meant to serve.
- Implement strategies to support the emotional and social needs of service delivery agents within anti-poverty programs to seed and support a dynamic, rich network of human relationships between such agents and their community clients.
- Leverage technology and data to build relationships and networks of support to build social capital in communities affected by poverty.
- Explore deeper and more holistic ways to measure success and community and national well-being in order to reflect multiple forms of capital, beyond economic and financial capital.

Even as the government looks to these recommendations to increase opportunity and mobility for low- income populations in partnership with faith-based and community partners, we recognize that there is more work to do. Declining wages, abusive financial practices, tax policies, the decline of organized labor, and the structural power of special interests that contribute to a winners-take-all system are among the root causes of extreme inequality and financial insecurity not addressed by these recommendations. We acknowledge the opportunity for more work, both by government and in partnership with faith-based and community partners, to create a comprehensive system in which more Americans feel connected to our collective prosperity as a nation.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As faith and community leaders striving to heal broken families and communities, we are convinced that it is possible to strive for an economy that has as its first priority a respect for the preciousness of humanity and that strives for the common good. Today, many of our laws and practices can perpetuate an unfair playing ground, particularly for people of color, native peoples, women, the elderly, and other marginalized communities. Some of our laws and practices enshrine a value of survival of the fittest, rather than a concern for the vulnerable that is called for in our great faith traditions.

As a Council, we have also explored how historical harm done to specific racial ethnic groups, especially Native and African-American communities, continues to be enshrined in current laws, systems, and practices such as our criminal justice system and our failure to address lead poisoning. For the sake of all of our wellbeing, both spiritual and communal, we must seek to repair this breach, confront our history, and confess our past and current practices that have kept entire communities marginalized and enabled some to benefit at the expense of others. We are, after all, our brothers' and sisters' keepers.

Our national productivity must be measured not by economic indices alone, but by the level of dignity and hope experienced by each and every American citizen. How we implement our government policies is as important as the policies themselves. Government delivery systems can and should inspire hope and strengthen community relations.

As faith-based and community leaders, we believe that capital in its many forms and poverty are interrelated in complex ways. There are multiple forms of capital including financial, social, informational, experiential, spiritual, natural, cultural, and raw material. Financial poverty, for example, is often correlated with reduced informational and social capital and diminished access to natural resources. Financial poverty is often also associated with various external and internal impediments that may block individuals' realization or expression of their personal resources.

As the Council makes its recommendations, we are particularly attentive to the following principles:

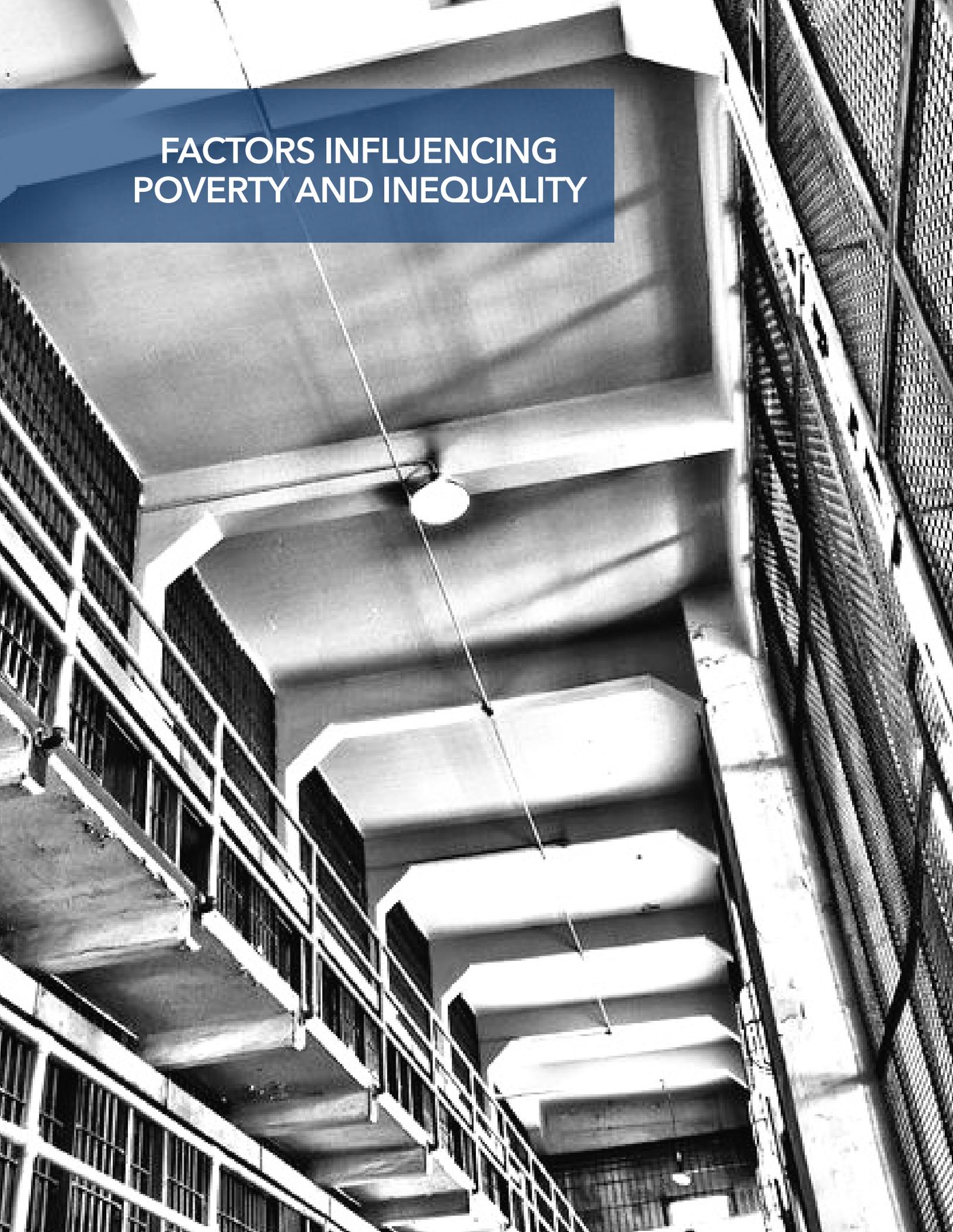
- Extreme inequality is a social ill with deep spiritual and communal implications. It not only perpetuates poverty, but also demeans human dignity, crushes the human spirit, and severs family communal bonds, ultimately resulting in the undermining of democratic institutions. It erodes families, communities, and nations by pulling us apart and wasting the gifts of our citizens who are deprived of opportunities to achieve and contribute.
- Efforts to substantially alleviate inequality and poverty must address these underlying economic, social, and racial justice issues in order for our policies reflect our values. Focusing solely on charity and service provision is inadequate. Poverty and inequality must be understood as structural problems.
- To address complex social ills, government must not only provide resources but must also serve as an enabler, encouraging partnerships within local ecosystems of place-based actors, including individuals, faith-based and neighborhood groups, service providers, and public institutions. Such linkages function as seed capital for catalyzing strong communities and harnessing non-material assets within communities. By using more holistic outcome metrics to measure progress, the government can strengthen this important role as enabler.

- In addition to requiring supplemental policy inputs, social progress that addresses economic poverty and inequality will require redesigned interventions aimed at unlocking the inner assets and social capital of individuals and communities affected by poverty. The vast potential of government to uplift individuals and communities is enhanced when government focuses on relationships, social capital, and the human moment when the constituent comes face to face with the government. For far too many clients in federal programs, that critical moment is a transactional, bureaucratic exchange limited to straight delivery of material aid. But we know policy success depends on the quality of the interaction. When members of the public connect with a federal program, there should be the potential to initiate a series of transformational interactions that leverage the potential inherent within every individual. Government should strengthen the front-line delivery of services so that the provision of the material aid is uplifting to clients, resulting in transformative personal interactions and relationships that may lead to sustainable change.

Lastly, in all federal efforts to increase opportunity and reduce inequality, we affirm the importance of working with rather than for low income individuals. This is especially important for those individuals disproportionately and historically impacted by poverty and inequality. Instead of reducing capital by deciding what is needed, it is important for policy to be developed with the input, perspective and voice of those the policy is designed to serve. This will not only empower these individuals, but it will ultimately improve the quality and outcome for the program and policy in question.



FACTORS INFLUENCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY



FACTORS INFLUENCING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Extreme inequality and financial insecurity are the result of many factors, including those listed below, which need to be addressed through collaborative, holistic, multi-disciplinary strategies within communities:

- **Declining Wages:** Real wages have stagnated or declined for the majority of workers from the early 1970s to the present day, despite gains in economic growth and worker productivity².
- **Discrimination:** Structural discrimination, both historical and current, continues to prevent women, people of color, LGBT individuals, and immigrants from escaping poverty and accumulating resources. Many communities of color, both rural and urban, experience persistent poverty and real barriers to opportunity. Avenues to economic mobility such as high-quality education, property ownership, employment, and inclusion in local institutions are systemically denied in many minority communities.
- **Concentrated Poverty:** Many communities, both rural and urban, experience persistent and widespread poverty. Opportunity is limited in the nation's 353 persistently poor counties, where 20 percent or more of the residents were poor over the last thirty years. More than 85 percent of these counties are non-metro, and the vast majority are in the South. In 48 U.S. counties, largely non-metro and Southern, at least half of the children are living in poverty³. Extremely concentrated poverty in places including Puerto Rico and Native American reservations must be addressed.
- **Emotional Harm and Diminished Social Ties and Networks:** Individuals and families in poverty suffer not only from material deprivation, but they also experience disproportionate rates of stress, emotional harm and trauma, fractured relationships, and diminished social ties and networks. The cumulative impacts of these complexities impede the resiliency and ability of these individuals to recover from material poverty and lead to a persistent cycle of poverty.
- **Abusive financial practices:** Corrupt financial practices, such as payday lending, predatory mortgage and student loan terms, and other abusive lending practices create a poverty trap and derail economic opportunity for millions of Americans while weakening the U.S. economy. In the wake of the 2008 financial collapse, which was driven in part by predatory mortgage practices and other abuses by those in the financial system, millions lost their homes from the Great Recession, representing a massive loss of middle-class wealth.
- **Mass Incarceration:** Policies such as the "War on Drugs" and other crime policies adopted in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in skyrocketing incarceration rates. American citizens, including youth, were given punitive sentences for very minor offenses. According to data from the Prison Policy Initiative, based on data from the 2010 Census, African-American, Hispanic and Native American populations are all overrepresented in United States prisons and jails⁴. The Sentencing Project has documented disparities in various components of the criminal justice system for both communities of color as well as low income populations⁵. Today, previously incarcerated individuals, who are disproportionately African-American and Latino men, face forbidding barriers to employment, including loss of licenses, restrictions against certain occupations, lack of training and other rehabilitative services, and employers' reluctance to even interview those with criminal records.

- **Systemic barriers to economic inclusion:** Roadblocks faced by many low-income people include lack of work-related credentials, inadequate child care and transportation, health problems, and outstanding debt. Lack of employment protections for LGBT people has led to people being fired for their sexual orientation or gender identity⁶.
- **Our broken immigration system:** Perhaps one third of the children and one fifth of adults in the nation's 12 million undocumented immigrants are caught in poverty⁷. The failure to provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants has denied countless hardworking people opportunities to earn a living, support their families, and advance their education in this country. Violence, upheaval, and poverty in places like Central America have created pressures that drive many people in poverty to relocate, and we have not taken sufficient action to assist their home countries in addressing these plights to ease the pressure for relocation. Law enforcement practices can have economic impact on families of mixed immigration status. These same practices result in fathers and mothers becoming separated from their children and jeopardizing their ability to support their families financially. Children and families fleeing violence in Central America are being detained in prisons for long and uncertain periods, crushing their spirits and diminishing their future prospects.
- **Tax policies that concentrate wealth:** Tax decreases that disproportionately favor the wealthiest few Americans – such as cuts to taxes on capital gains, dividends, high incomes, and multimillion-dollar inheritances -- have accelerated income and wealth inequality.
- **A weakening of the social safety net:** Reductions in cash assistance for the poorest families with children contributed significantly to an increase in the number of children in extreme poverty, which is defined as living in a household with an income below half of the federal poverty line. In 1995, the year before Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) was created, its precursor program Aid to Families With Dependent Children lifted 2.4 million children above half the poverty line. In 2010, TANF lifted only 600,000 children above that level of extreme poverty⁸.
- **The decline of organized labor:** As the percentage of American workers has plummeted, so has the share of economic growth that trickles down to working families. Decreased collective bargaining power in the workplace has led to loss of retirement benefits (e.g., pensions), wage stagnation, and a decline in both standard of living and community support systems for many Americans.
- **The divisive power of special interests:** The disproportionate access and influence of wealthy groups and individuals in the political process has grown with the increasing concentration of income and wealth. Too often, the common good is lost in a sea of well-funded special interests and ideologically driven extremes. As a result, the federal government is frequently unable to implement policies that are widely supported by the American people. This includes policies that would alleviate poverty and provide economic security to many.
- **Destabilization of families:** Research consistently shows a strong correlation between economic security and the presence of stable families with two married parents. But the proportion of families with this structure has steadily declined. In 1960, only 9 percent of U.S. children lived in one-parent households; in 2013, 34 percent lived in one-parent households⁹. The diminished resources, social capital, and opportunities available to many of these families inhibit economic mobility, which perpetuates poverty and inequality.



PROVEN TOOLS THAT WORK



- A. 640.320.00
- B. 144.000.00
- C. 286.000.00
- D. 255.500.00
- E. 540.000.00

RIGHT NOW DOWN

- A. ASIA
- B. INDIA
- C. USA

PROVEN TOOLS THAT WORK

Proven tools for ending poverty, lack of opportunity, and financial insecurity already exist. The following programs demonstrate that we can succeed by getting at the root causes of poverty:

- **Housing:** Initiatives launched by the Obama Administration have reached nearly 230,000 veterans and their families with support from HUD and VA programs. From 2010 through January 2015, the number of homeless veterans declined 36 percent, while the number of veterans sleeping unsheltered declined 47 percent. Since 2008, investments in 70,000 housing vouchers combined with services to assist formerly homeless veterans saved \$6,000 per participant in health service costs. In addition to successes in ending veteran homelessness, there has been a 22% decrease in chronic homelessness and a 19% decrease in family homelessness since 2010¹⁰. Low-income rental housing assistance lifted 3 million people out of poverty in 2014. Compared to children who remain in poor communities, new findings show that children whose families used rental vouchers to move to lower-poverty neighborhoods earned 31% more in adulthood.
- **Nutrition:** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) lifted as many as 10 million people out of poverty in 2014, including 5 million children. Recent research demonstrates that when young children receive food assistance, there are lifelong benefits in education, health, and earnings. Among adults who grew up in disadvantaged households, those who received SNAP in utero and early childhood have an obesity prevalence in adulthood that is 16% lower and they are 18% more likely to have completed high school.
- **Refundable Tax Credits:** The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit together lifted another 10 million people out of poverty in 2014, including 5 million children. These tax credits for low-income working families with children have been shown to improve child health and maternal mental and physical health. A \$1,000 increase in the EITC was associated with up to a 15 percent decrease in low birth weight in high poverty areas.
- **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund:** At the height of the challenges from the economic recession, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 placed more than 250,000 individuals in jobs with assistance. Implementers of the program note that the program facilitated additional connections and helped small businesses stay in business¹¹.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

We see hope in the fact that our national and global debates are now recognizing that financial poverty and extreme inequality are not inevitable. Many countries have been making rapid progress against poverty in recent decades and the United States has also made substantial progress. Our prosperity is so great, but it is still so remote for too many. We believe in an economy that offers opportunity and security to all by building on policies that have expanded full inclusion and participation in our society and given more Americans the tools they need to succeed. We must change policies that have diminished the economic prospects of middle- and lower-income families and have resulted in a decline in the standard of living for many even while our GDP and productivity have steadily grown.

Faith and community-based organizations have historically been primary resources for addressing problems of poverty and economic inequality. Across the country and around the world, these communities are today on the front lines of advocacy for social justice by directly providing education, healthcare, and social services to many at-risk populations. Faith-based and neighborhood groups have long recognized that when it comes to helping people, the quality of the interaction and the relationship - including the relationship with and nurturance of those charged with helping others - are paramount. These organizations are first responders to those most imperiled by family instability and economic dislocation. Faith and community-based charities, food security programs, and social assistance programs are in many cases the last resort for families and individuals desperately in need of immediate material assistance. Most importantly, faith and community leaders hold up for all a vision for the common good to be measured by what our nation does for those most in need.

Our collective efforts over the past few decades have demonstrated that we can eliminate poverty in this country if we commit ourselves to doing so. Through the course of our meetings as a Council, we heard numerous examples of programs effectively addressing challenges for low-income populations and transforming communities. From the deep partnerships created within Promise Zones to addressing childhood obesity and drastically reducing veteran homelessness, the Administration has implemented a rich and diverse body of programs and policies that are working to reduce poverty and increase opportunity. These programs are building trust and accountability through collaboration in local communities where trust has been broken.

We believe that these efforts are striking examples of success to build on to increase opportunity and reduce inequality. We acknowledge the opportunity for more work, both by government and in partnership with faith-based and community partners, to create a comprehensive system in which more and more Americans feel connected to our collective prosperity as a nation through the recommendations to increase economic opportunity.



WE RECOMMEND THAT THE PRESIDENT LEAD THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN AMERICA.

- The world as a whole is making dramatic progress against hunger, poverty, and disease. The nations of the world recently committed themselves to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which begin with commitments to end poverty and hunger by 2030. The global goals also address the issues of inequality and environmental sustainability.

We commend the President for affirming that the new global goals apply to all countries, including the United States. The administration is encouraging other countries to take the SDGs seriously and considering how these goals relate to domestic policy priorities like criminal justice reform.

We are also pleased that U.S. faith leaders, organizations of civil society, foundations, and some city governments are already committing themselves to these goals for our own country and the world. Specifically:

- 100 faith leaders from all of our nation's major faith traditions gathered before Pope Francis' visit and the United Nations session where the SDG were adopted. The faith leaders committed themselves to pray and work for the end of hunger in our country and worldwide by 2030 and, toward that end, to help achieve a shift in U.S. national priorities by 2017¹².

- Feeding America, the national network of food banks, has committed itself to work with other nonprofits and government agencies to achieve nutritious food and progress toward economic security for all by 2025¹³.
- The Council on Foundations and Foundation Center are encouraging U.S. foundations to use the SDGs as a framework to inform and coordinate their domestic grants¹⁴.
- Five cities and one state (California) have committed themselves to develop plans to achieve the SDGs in their own jurisdictions¹⁵.

In the history of the United States and other countries, we have repeatedly seen that a clear statement of goals can have wide influence and drive change. That is why we encourage the White House to continue to promote U.S. awareness of the global goals and to highlight the relevance of the goals in our own country.

We recommend that the President lead the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in America in a way that reflects the new global goals but is also rooted in our nation's own realities and aspirations. A clear statement of U.S. goals and indicators would raise expectations and set up a framework of accountability. The White House should invite input from diverse leaders and organizations, ensuring that the President's articulation of our domestic implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals reflects broadly held values and continues to be a point of reference beyond the end of this administration.

As faith and community leaders, we commit ourselves to:

- participate in the process of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in America;
- engage diverse U.S. organizations and leaders, including representatives from disproportionately affected communities;
- urge the next administration to maintain commitment to implement the new Sustainable Development Goals in America; and
- work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in America, notably the end of extreme poverty and hunger in our country by 2030.



WE RECOMMEND THE PRESIDENT CREATE A CROSS AGENCY WORKING GROUP THAT WOULD COORDINATE AND INCREASE AWARENESS OF FEDERAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS POVERTY AND INEQUALITY IN AMERICA.

Presently, it is challenging for most faith and community leaders to be aware of the federal programs addressing poverty and inequality. Once they find programs, it can be difficult to learn about and connect with government programs that are already in place or to understand what the current administration has already enacted in regard to these issues. One way to overcome such difficulties would be the creation of an interagency working group (IWG) that could coordinate and promote these efforts.

The creation of an interagency working group to coordinate poverty alleviation efforts in this country could provide a better entry point for faith-based and community organizations to interact with the sprawling government programs intersecting with poverty, similar to the role the Small Business Administration has to help small business owners liaise with the government. It could also provide a needed source of optimism and hope to inspire faith and community leaders and the country to believe that it is possible to address and eliminate poverty our nation. The IWG can demonstrate that the government intends to expend significant resources and partner with every willing organization in order to eliminate poverty.

Specifically, this group could be created by the White House, including by an Executive Order, and tasked with three goals. First, an IWG could aggregate and disseminate the most recent impartial metrics assessing poverty and economic inequality in the United States. Currently, that information is scattered across the websites of federal agencies and programs. Over time, U.S. metrics could assess the impact of racial equity and should incorporate the indicators that are being developed for all countries as part of the Sustainable Development

Goal process. We also note the opportunity to consider holistic metrics to measure success and wellness in the implementation of programs coordinated through this IWG.

The second goal of the proposed IWG could be to create a clearinghouse of all current programs and initiatives of the federal government to address the issues of poverty and economic inequality. Moreover, the collection would detail the specific initiatives of the current administration in regard to these issues. The purpose of this one-stop-shop would be to provide a record of what government implemented, relative to these matters, in plain language and to increase awareness of these efforts. Data could be included where available.

The third goal of this group would be to provide state and local authorities and faith-based and other civil society organizations with ideas for partnering or connecting their members with governmental programs that address poverty and economic inequality. This goal could also be achieved by listing information and other resources that might be available to faith-based and other civil society organizations to assist in their private work in addressing poverty and economic inequality. This goal would benefit from involving federal agency offices that focus on outreach and engagements of these stakeholder groups.

Alongside the implementation of this effort, we as faith and community leaders affirm our desire and intent to share information from this IWG with our communities. We affirm that those in our communities are eager for information about the U.S. government's efforts to serve vulnerable populations and for guidance on how they can form partnerships and complement government programs at the community and national level.

To allow easy access to this information, we recommend that the IWG have an outreach component that could be accomplished through a website similar to the existing website www.youth.gov.

This website should provide information on poverty and inequality and government programs aimed to alleviate these issues. Such a site should describe these efforts and programs in plain language so that the information and resources are easily accessible to a wide range of audiences and partners, including faith-based and community programs and leaders.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE THE FOLLOWING ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS TO ADDRESS POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Among the many critical and complementary components of a successful anti-poverty strategy, these recommendations focus on the following: housing affordability and location; assisting fathers in overcoming barriers to contributing support to their children; improving health by screening for food insecurity; and addressing youth homelessness.

Expand Access to Housing in Low-Poverty/High Opportunity Neighborhoods

Millions of the poorest households pay more than half their income on rent and are at great risk of homelessness. Of households living at 30 percent or less of their area's median income, nearly 2.6 million are elderly without children and 4 million are families with children. Among this group of elderly households, 1.9 million are living below the poverty line and 1.4 million are paying more than half their income on rent. Among families with children living below 30 percent of their area's median income, 3.8 million are below the poverty line and 2.6 million are paying more than half their income on rent. Our nation needs to increase the stock of affordable housing and to make more rental subsidies available to households with older adults, people with disabilities, and families with children¹⁶.

There is important research suggesting that children in poor families that are able to use rental housing vouchers to relocate to lower-poverty areas are 32% more likely to attend college, and earn 31% more as young adults compared to young adults who grew up poor in higher poverty areas¹⁷. Vouchers that help families move to better neighborhoods enable families to reduce their exposure to violence, increase their access to good quality school, and reduce the likelihood of girls becoming single parents, and are of particular benefit to poor African-American, Latino, and Native American children.

Right now, many users of Housing Choice Vouchers can only find housing in high-poverty neighborhoods. In order to increase the number of families who can find housing in higher-opportunity areas, HUD can take the following steps:

- **Set caps on rental subsidies for smaller geographic areas and require housing agencies to identify available rental units in higher-opportunity communities.** Fair market rents may be higher in lower-poverty neighborhoods than in the larger geographic areas HUD now uses for setting the maximum allowable rent. Under current practice, this will inhibit poor families from using their vouchers in neighborhoods with greater resources and less concentrated poverty. HUD can also make it easier for families to move to unfamiliar and more mixed-income neighborhoods by requiring housing agencies to provide listings of available units and by extending the search period for the family to find a landlord who will accept the voucher.
- **Provide incentives and remove barriers for housing authorities to encourage use of vouchers for moves to lower-poverty neighborhoods.** HUD should be commended for its steps to make aggressive use of the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. This rule can be used to count higher-opportunity location outcomes as measures of housing agency performance. HUD should pay additional administrative fees to agencies that help families to move to low-poverty areas. HUD should also change the Housing Choice Voucher administrative boundaries to encourage housing authorities in the same metropolitan area to unify operations to encourage moves to lower-poverty neighborhoods.

- **Maximize construction of low-income housing through the National Housing Trust Fund.** The Administration deserves accolades for moving forward with the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF), both through its interim regulations and its release of funding from Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac to begin in 2016. It can take certain steps to ensure that investment in new housing proceeds smoothly and targets the lowest-income families.
- **Target housing production for the lowest-income families.** The interim rule should be changed before states get their first funds because it would set rents in NHTF-funded units based on poverty level incomes, a level that is well above rents that extremely low income households can afford in 72% of housing markets. Instead, rents should be set at 30% of area median income or at the poverty level, whichever is lower.
- **Release guidance by HUD for the state allocation plans as soon as possible.** This will help ensure states use the National Housing Trust Fund monies efficiently and effectively.

Assisting fathers in overcoming barriers to contributing support to their children

- **Make the child support rules final as a means of promoting employment and removing barriers for re-entry in the criminal justice system for fathers:** The Administration deserves much praise for having produced a rule modernizing the child support system to reflect current realities about the ability of noncustodial parents to pay support and to help to increase their ability to work. Approximately 25% of noncustodial parents have a limited ability to pay child support and communities of color are disproportionately represented in this group¹⁸. Most of these parents and their nonresident children live in poverty. The proposed regulation gets to the root cause of the issue: unemployment and underemployment.
- **Remove barriers to employment.** Punitive child support enforcement tools, such as license revocation and civil contempt, are unlikely to result in child support payments by low-income fathers and mothers, as the underlying problem for these parents is often the multiple barriers they face to finding and keeping a job. The new child support rules would help noncustodial parents find their economic footing and contribute financially to their children by giving state agencies new options to use federal child support funding to offer employment services to noncustodial parents who are out of work or struggling to make regular payments. In many states, there are already efforts to help noncustodial parents locate jobs, instead of jailing them for nonpayment. These efforts have resulted in parents paying more child support and making more consistent payments.
- **Base child support orders on ability to pay.** One of the most important components of the proposed regulation is the requirement that states consider noncustodial parents' actual ability to pay when setting child support orders. Unrealistic support orders help no one and trap parents in a vicious cycle of debt, nonpayment, and even incarceration. Many states have instituted new procedures to establish more realistic child support orders based on parents' ability to pay. Evidence shows that income-based orders result in more regular child support payments over time. Conversely, when support orders do not account for the noncustodial parent's actual ability to pay, children are less likely to receive any child support and noncustodial parents are more likely to accumulate significant child support arrears, which can impede parental employment, reduce parental involvement, increase family conflict, and decrease current support payments.

As of 2012, incarceration was not a permissible basis for suspending child support orders in 14 states. This means that a noncustodial parent can amass significant debt, including interest on debt, while behind bars in those jurisdictions, despite being unable to make payments. Given that many individuals leaving prison face significant barriers to employment, it can be difficult, if not impossible, for these parents to dig themselves out of this hole, setting them on a path to re-incarceration.

- **Allow state child support (IV-D) agencies to provide certain job services to noncustodial parents.** The proposed rule would allow the use of IV-D funding for job training and other jobs services that can equip absent parents with necessary skills to compete for jobs with decent pay. Such funds should be used in a complementary way with funding available to help custodial parents prepare for better jobs, enabling both parents to increase their incomes and their ability to support their children.

Improving Community Health

New systems of payment promoted by the Administration reward health care providers for prevention and patient outcomes rather than tests and treatments and these systems hold promise for major improvements in the health of individuals, communities, and the health care system. The new focus, coupled with the need to address health care costs, is awakening health care providers to the benefits of addressing social issues and social determinants that have a significant impact on health outcomes. One of the biggest drivers of poor individual and community health and high health care costs is food insecurity and poor nutrition, conditions which disproportionately impact communities of color. A recent study found that food insecurity increased health expenditures on acute and chronic conditions in the United States by \$160 billion in 2014 alone, an acknowledged conservative estimate. Food insecurity and malnutrition are associated with higher rates of chronic conditions such as asthma, depression, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, and other physical and mental health problems. Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of food insecurity which can lead to lifelong health problems and poor educational and employment outcomes¹⁹.

- **Use Food Insecurity Screen in Health Care Settings.** One important way to change the trajectory of health care costs and improve health outcomes for individuals, families, and communities is for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to issue guidance to all health care providers for screening their patients for signs of food insecurity and poor nutrition. A simple, two-question screen, validated by Children's Health Watch²⁰ and promoted by the American Academy of Pediatrics²¹, can alert health care professionals of the need to address food insecurity and poor nutrition in their patients. The screening tool is even more useful when it is incorporated into patients' electronic medical records and becomes part of their medical history. The screen also will serve as a catalyst for closer collaboration between the health care system, food assistance programs, and other community services engaged in improving community health.

Addressing Youth Homelessness

Our nation's youth crisis residential and longer-term housing programs are at full capacity. These programs serve homeless adolescents and young adults. In cities across the country, young people seeking short-term or long-term housing at youth programs are turned away daily because there are simply not enough beds or resources. However, we know that providing homeless youth and young adults with shelter and developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed services is our most effective strategy for keeping young people out of the juvenile justice system and preventing them from being victimized, exploited, or trafficked.

Housing programs specifically dedicated to serving youth experiencing homelessness across the country offer a range of wrap-around holistic services that help young people avoid adult homelessness and promote self-sufficient independent living as adults. These services include case management, medical and mental health care, legal assistance, substance abuse treatment, and a comprehensive range of vocational and educational programming.

The current Administration has seen marked growth in the level of cooperation and partnership among HUD, HHS, ED, DOJ and DOL. This is good news for the nation's most vulnerable youth, but we affirm that more work needs to be done. Agencies that serve youth in mainstream programs (e.g., SNAP, WIC, Child Welfare, Office of Juvenile Justice, etc.) should be encouraged to partner with HUD in the development of complementary initiatives that will support the demonstration and systems approach to ending youth homelessness. For example, in the recent Omnibus Spending Bill, HUD was included in the Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) with the Departments of Education, Labor, Justice, and Health and Human Services to develop innovative, cost-effective, and outcome-based strategies aimed at disconnected youth. Per this example, it is beneficial to reduce administrative barriers to make it easier for youth demonstration communities to blend funding pursuant to the P3 program.

One specific population of note among the homeless youth in this country is unaccompanied children, who are minors under 18 years old who made the dangerous journey to the U.S. without a parent or legal guardian. All unaccompanied children are placed with parents, relatives, or other appropriate individuals while their cases proceed through the immigration court system. However, some of those arrangements are not constructive and, as a result, the youth may end up homeless. The exact number of children in this situation is unknown because many are undocumented and living in the shadows of our communities. These unaccompanied homeless children often have experiences similar to homeless youth born here in America. Many are survivors of severe trauma, have significant mental health needs, and lack access to medical care, educational support, and legal assistance. Likewise they are at great risk for exploitation, abuse, and trafficking.

We recommend the following efforts that could be implemented by the Administration to address and ultimately end youth homelessness while also addressing the unique challenges for unaccompanied children at high risk for homelessness. Building on the successes of this Administration, these efforts, if implemented, will strengthen the safety net and opportunity agenda for the country's least advantaged and most vulnerable young people:

- **Make sure housing models focus on youth homelessness.** While it is important to acknowledge the effectiveness of the Housing First and rapid re-housing models to address chronic homelessness among adults, there is an absence of data to know if this model is effective for achieving successful outcomes for homeless youth. Furthermore, there is a concern that the theory of change may not make sense for all homeless youth populations based on their distinct developmental stages and need for correspondingly appropriate supportive services. We affirm the need for a full continuum of housing models, with varied degrees of intensity based on the spectrum of individuals affected by homelessness. We recommend that agencies consider developmentally appropriate housing models, including transitional housing programs that some youth need in order to develop healthy independent living skills. We also encourage the conduct of research specific to homeless youth populations to understand the effectiveness of transitional housing, rapid re-housing or housing first models, and combinations of both models for this population. In FY 2016, \$33 million from the budget focused on implementing projects using a comprehensive approach to dramatically reduce youth homelessness, and future funds should be allocated to pilot programs with a variety of models that address the comprehensive needs of



homeless youth, including both minor and transition-age youth. Lastly, we encourage the use of best practices identified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in working with youth in general and with homeless youth in particular. We specifically acknowledge the valuable knowledge collected through the 40+ year history in the Runaway and Homeless Youth grant program within HHS and call for all programs that target services to homeless youth to build on lessons learned from these programs.

- **Improve quality of and access to data.** Timely, easily accessible, and reliable data is key to understanding the needs of homeless individuals, including homeless youth, and achieving measurable progress towards meeting those needs. Many service providers have noted shortcomings of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), especially in regard to homeless youth. We call upon HUD and local Continuums of Care to study the strengths and areas for improvement related to HMIS. They should work to quickly identify and implement actions to improve the quality and accessibility of data in HMIS to ensure real time, user-friendly, and reliable information related to homelessness.
- **Increase support for rigorous evaluation of programs working with homeless youth.** We call for increased rigorous evaluation of program outcomes and system measures for youth homelessness, including the evaluation of the adequacy of assessment tools, program referral accuracy, and the effectiveness of interventions in serving specific types of young people (i.e. LGBT youth, youth of color, trafficked youth, and youth aging out of foster care). Right now, the assessments that are administered by many HUD-funded providers are focused on determining eligibility for HUD-funded housing rather than determining what young people need to stabilize, exit homelessness, and

prevent recurring episodes. Implementation of needs assessments, as well as rigorous program evaluations, will lead to better outcomes for youth and will be a better use of federal resources. We recommend that the Administration encourage relevant federal agencies to rigorously evaluate the entire continuum of services, including street outreach, emergency shelter, transitional living, and permanent supportive housing for youth who are homeless. Lastly, we encourage research and evaluation to consider the unique learning and best practices gained from working with homeless youth that can be promoted to the broader efforts to address all homelessness.

- **Support Mental Health.** Experiencing homelessness is a traumatic event for anyone, but the trauma is further compounded for youth who are in a developmentally vulnerable period. It is therefore not surprising that many of the nation's homeless youth, who have faced multiple placements and moves throughout their young lives, are experiencing mental health disorders, including, PTSD, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and depression. Our nation's youth shelters are also seeing a rise in acute psychosis, schizophrenia, and active suicidality. However, shelter beds dedicated to homeless youth with severe mental health needs are few and far between. The nation needs more beds and services that are dedicated specifically to homeless youth experiencing acute mental health problems and are offered in a trauma-informed and youth centered environment. It is recommended that some activities (e.g., grants, conferences, research, etc.) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration be targeted to provide mental health and substance abuse intervention to homeless youth with a housing model that is youth-appropriate.
- **Reduce the risk of homelessness for unaccompanied children.** Services for unaccompanied homeless children are particularly vital now, as unprecedented numbers of these children have been coming to the U.S. in recent years. Many are from Central America—Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador—and are fleeing pervasive violence in their home countries. Others include children who have been abandoned, have lost their caretaker in their home country, or have been trafficked. We call on the Administration and Congress to increase funding to provide the necessary support for these individuals such as legal services. In tandem, as faith and community leaders, we commit to identify ways we can support and engage with this population post-release to provide access to services and protection if difficulties arise with their sponsors or if they are at risk of experiencing or becoming homelessness. In addition, we commit to identifying strategies to connect with and support immigrant children in homeless shelters, such as the ability to receive legal screenings to determine if they are potentially eligible for immigration relief, including relief related to trafficking and exploitation. A number of these children may have viable claims for U.S. protection and would otherwise miss an opportunity to gain status in the U.S.; others may have specific social service and protection needs.

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE STEPS TO REMOVE LEAD HAZARDS FROM FEDERALLY ASSISTED HOUSING AND RESPOND ON AN EMERGENCY BASIS TO PROTECT CHILDREN WHEN A LEAD HAZARD IS IDENTIFIED OR IF ANYONE IS POISONED IN SUCH UNITS.

Lead contamination of the water supply in Flint, Michigan is a public health emergency that is harming thousands of children, a disproportionate number of whom are poor and African-American. The Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships strongly urges the Administration to do all in its power to respond to this disaster, including hastening federal assistance to ensure that all households receive steady supplies of emergency water and effective filtration devices and working in partnership with state and local authorities to make drinking water safe again.

It is increasingly apparent that harm to children from lead poisoning spreads much farther than the disastrous failure in Flint. More than one-fifth of children from the poorest neighborhoods in Chicago have damaging levels of lead poisoning²². The danger falls heavily on minority children, with African-American children nearly three times more likely than Caucasian children to have highly elevated blood-lead levels and associated health and developmental damage.

Government at all levels has failed to make long-term investment in lead abatement strategies. The Advisory Council recognizes that solutions require local, state, and federal authorities to shoulder responsibility. Because lead poisoning of children can result in irreversible brain damage that makes breaking through the chains of poverty more difficult, it is within the Advisory Council's charge to recommend steps that this Administration can take to reduce lead poisoning in children.

In addition to essential actions to ensure that drinking water is safe, we recommend the following efforts that should be implemented by the Administration to protect families from lead poisoning in federally assisted housing:

- **Eliminate lead exposure in federally assisted housing units.** One critical step is to prevent federally assisted housing units from being a source of lead poisoning. According to the Chicago Department of Public Health, nearly 300 children in households utilizing HUD rental vouchers in Chicago were diagnosed with lead poisoning at levels beyond CDC's definition of 5 micrograms per deciliter over the past three years. In New Orleans, 2,000 public housing tenants successfully sued for lead poisoning. Other suits were settled or won in Baltimore, Cleveland, and Chicago.
- **Promote prevention services.** In addition, primary prevention that identifies and eliminates a lead hazard before a child is poisoned is crucial. Based on the latest and prevailing scientific evidence, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes that there is no safe level of lead in children's blood²³. Yet, HUD has not updated its regulations to prevent lead contamination in subsidized units to be consistent with this new science and definitions. Every additional microgram of lead per deciliter in children is associated with reduction in IQ.
- **Update the definition of lead poisoning.** Since 1999, HUD's regulations have not required intervention when a child is lead-poisoned until his or her blood lead level reaches 20 micrograms per deciliter or 15-19 micrograms per deciliter over three months is reached, which is three to four times higher than the CDC's current reference value for lead poisoning. On March 8, HUD submitted a proposed rule to the Office of Management and Budget's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs that would amend the Lead-Based Paint Poisoning Prevention regulations to adopt the

CDC's definition of elevated blood-lead level. According to HUD, the proposed rules would also "establish more comprehensive testing and evaluation procedures for HUD and other Federally-assisted or -owned housing in which children with elevated blood lead levels reside." Although it includes important steps forward, HUD's proposed rule will not prevent lead poisoning in program participants. We encourage members of the Advisory Council and other interested parties to comment on the proposed rule once it is made public.

- **Relocate at-risk families.** We strongly recommend that families whose children exhibit lead poisoning be allowed to move on an emergency basis to safe housing without loss of their housing subsidy. All too often, there is no urgent response to eliminate lead hazards even when one is identified or a child in a household exhibits severe lead poisoning symptoms. For example, families who seek to move in order to protect their children risk losing their Housing Choice Voucher Program subsidy. For most, that choice would lead to homelessness. In 2015 the Chicago Tribune reported that Lanice Walker, a mother in Chicago, lived with her nine children in federally assisted housing that an inspector said showed no signs of lead paint hazards. Less than five months later, her four-year old daughter was diagnosed with lead poisoning. Ms. Walker asked the Chicago Housing Authority to be moved on an emergency basis, but was turned down. All of her children were eventually found to have elevated lead levels, but were only relocated after the intervention of a nonprofit legal clinic. Families should not have to choose between losing their housing and continuing their children's exposure to lead poisoning.
- **Update inspection procedures.** Of critical importance, HUD must update its inspection procedures to more accurately identify lead contamination and to require remediation in federally assisted housing units. Currently, in the Housing Choice Voucher Program, Project Based Section 8, and Public Housing, HUD only requires the visual inspection of a unit to identify obviously peeling paint. The General Accountability Office determined in 1994 that visual assessments are ineffective in identifying lead hazards. Accepted scientific evidence demonstrates that this is inadequate to identify toxic levels of lead in dust or soil in and around the unit, which are the major source of lead poisoning. We recommend that HUD amend its rules to require risk assessments, which include the collection of samples of dust, dirt, water, and paint, for all federally assisted housing and to require lead abatement or interim controls in those units if they do not pass inspection. In order to ensure the accuracy of risk assessments, HUD and the EPA must update their risk assessments and clearance exam levels for lead-dust and lead-dirt to the scientifically supported levels, as noted in the legislative history and multiple well-regarded scientific studies. We also encourage the Administration to ensure that contracts and services provided to inspect and remediate lead include preferences for minority-owned and/or locally managed corporations to increase the economic benefit for the community while addressing this pressing public health concern.
- **Foster faith-based and neighborhood partnerships.** Building on what has been learned from addressing lead exposure in the Flint community and in implementing the efforts described above, the Administration should provide resources in more communities to address lead exposure in children. Materials developed for Flint should be created, modified, and developed for use with faith and community leaders in other communities where there are concerns about lead exposure. Resources should be developed for faith and community leaders to address lead exposure in their communities and opportunities should be expanded beyond Flint to help more communities understand lead exposure.



We appreciate the Administration's endeavor to increase funding for lead poisoning prevention above the low levels approved by Congress in FY 2011 and beyond. We urge the Administration to take steps consistent with its executive authority to remove lead hazards from federally assisted housing and to respond on an emergency basis to protect children when a lead hazard is identified or when they are poisoned in such units. Every child is precious; protecting all our children is a solemn responsibility recognized by all people of faith and conscience.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION PERSISTENTLY PURSUE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BIPARTISAN ACTION AND DIALOGUE ON POVERTY AND OPPORTUNITY.

We were pleased that President Obama’s State of the Union Address provided Speaker Ryan with a “serious discussion” on bipartisan approaches to poverty and opportunity. As part of the discussion, we recommend seizing the opportunity to seek legislative action on items such as:

- **Grassley-Durbin Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act of 2015:** Harsh mandatory minimum prison sentences have contributed to the increase of our country’s prison population. When someone goes to prison, the family often loses income. Thus, children of incarcerated parents are more likely to suffer poverty. Prisoners lose work skills and often have little opportunity for rehabilitative programs. This makes it harder to find a job after leaving prison. Criminal justice reform is a pressing bipartisan issue in Congress this year, and the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act (SRCA) is a bipartisan Senate bill. It would reduce some mandatory minimums for nonviolent prisoners and provide “time credits” for job training, drug rehabilitation, and other rehabilitative programs.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit for childless adults:** The President and Speaker Ryan have similar proposals to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) to include childless workers, who are the only group that the federal tax system taxes into poverty. Both proposals would roughly double the maximum EITC for single workers and expand eligibility to include single workers ages 21 to 25. The President’s proposal would encourage work and reduce poverty for more than 13 million low-income workers.
- **Global Food Security Act:** The Global Food Security Act would authorize a comprehensive strategy for the U.S. government to fight hunger and malnutrition, promote nutrition among pregnant women and newborns, and prioritize women smallholder farmers. The bill has bipartisan support in both houses of Congress. The House bill has passed the Foreign Affairs Committee and currently has 121 cosponsors. The Senate bill has passed the Foreign Relations Committee.
- **Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA):** Puerto Rico’s heavy debt has contributed to a depressed economy and unemployment of 12 percent. Tens of thousands of Puerto Ricans are leaving the island for the mainland United States in search of jobs and stability. Both Democrats and Republicans have expressed the need for congressional action.

We also recommend bipartisan dialogue on ways to make federal assistance more effective. We oppose deep cuts to low-income programs. We also oppose proposals to block-grant these programs, because block-granting in the past has led to declines in federal funding and state-level diversions of funding away from low-income people. There may be opportunities for helpful bipartisan agreement in some other areas, including:

- Improve coordination among assistance programs;
- Shift funding toward counties with persistently high rates of poverty;
- Increase cooperation with and support for effective community organizations;
- Shift in policies related to substance abuse (for example, more drug treatment courts);
- Subsidize employment programs;



- Continue experimentation through pilot programs and expanded efforts to gather evidence on program results; and
- Increase access to higher education for low income populations.

The discussion President Obama proposed can draw from several recent exercises in dialogue on poverty issues, including:

- the Georgetown University forum in which the President took part in 2015;
- the National Commission on Hunger;
- the Kemp Forum on Expanding Opportunity; and
- the recommendations on Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security from the American Enterprise Institute and Brookings Institution working group.

Bipartisan dialogue is difficult in an election year on any topic. Nevertheless, faith and community groups feel compelled to actively promote a robust discourse on poverty and opportunity issues.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS RACE, JUSTICE AND POVERTY



RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS RACE, JUSTICE AND POVERTY

We, as faith and community leaders, are deeply concerned by the inequality that is woven into the tapestry of our nation's policies, practices and laws at every level of government and culture. This structural economic inequality is rarely the result of personal decisions made by individuals from low-income and poor communities. Rather, it is the direct consequence of our economic and financial systems, compounded by histories of racial, gender, and class issues that have pervaded our country for centuries.

Rather than address the historical and structural causes of inequality we often disparage low-income populations, including African-American, Latino, Native American, and immigrant communities, blaming them for their situations. One unfortunate popular narrative reduces the causes of inequality to "personal responsibility." This framework has created a moral crisis in which we fail to recognize our failings as a society or to embrace the golden rule of loving and respecting our neighbors as we do ourselves. We instead dismiss structural racism and discrimination as the appropriate explanation for the poverty and exclusion that low income populations so often face. Not surprisingly, we see that communities of color are the most affected by social, financial, health, and justice disparities. To remedy the inequalities and yield future economic stability among these groups, a different narrative must become part of a shared national consciousness, analysis, and practice.

In separate recommendations by this Advisory Council, we have affirmed goals of ending hunger and poverty as well as reducing inequality in the United States by affirming the Sustainable Development Goals. To achieve these goals, we must acknowledge the disparities and unequal treatment that communities of color face economically, socially, and politically and then commit to racial equity-focused policy and practice at all levels.

These recommendations are practical steps the Administration can take to expedite a corrective effort. They also have the potential to lead our country into an aspirational conversation about how to include and widen concern for vulnerable communities experiencing poverty, incarceration, and immigration. We call upon the Administration to help unravel the strands of economic and social exclusion that is perpetuating these disastrous conditions.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION HELP LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AND COMMUNITIES STRENGTHEN ACCOUNTABILITY, TRUST, AND COLLABORATION.

We strongly believe in the importance of holding law enforcement systems accountable while we work alongside them to empower those affected by injustices that these systems sometimes bring forth. We know from our personal and professional connections to communities affected by these challenges that the law enforcement system is one in which we must encourage more accountability. We believe such accountability can be achieved through collaboration between law enforcement systems, community members, and faith leaders of varying religions that serve them.

In tandem with establishing trust and collaboration between agencies and communities, we believe accountability measures, including data collection and reporting, will result in stronger, healthier relationships and will decrease clashes between law enforcement agencies and community members.

The four groups featured in the recommendations below are undocumented Central American and Mexican immigrants, African American and Latino American communities, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, and Native American youth. These communities of color are disproportionately at risk of being targeted by law enforcement agencies and are less likely to have the type of legal, monetary, and informational support needed to effectively fight against injustice than white communities. We see that this cycle pushes already financially vulnerable households deeper into financial insecurity, exacerbating the disproportional levels of poverty among communities of color. The following approaches should be considered:

- **Increase data collection and reporting on racially targeted arrests, sentencing, deaths for Native American justice involving youth.** As a result of jurisdictional restraints of state, federal, and tribal governments, Native American youth are subject to federal prosecution for crimes committed that would have otherwise been eligible for state prosecution or tribal prosecution. This means that they are also subject to harsher and often mandatory sentences and are incarcerated in federal prisons. As faith and community leaders promote racial and economic justice, we stand in strong opposition to the practice of placing youth in federal prisons. Our recommendation is that education, after-care, and reentry programs in these facilities be carefully examined to ensure that youth currently incarcerated in federal prisons receive the necessary rehabilitation tools or alternatives are provided for Native American youth. This can be met by ensuring that the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is applied in federal prisons and youth have access to rehabilitation and educational programming in these facilities. We also recommend the Administration create a streamlined notification system that is used to notify tribal governments when one of their members, especially a juvenile, is facing incarceration. This information would help inform issues related to jurisdictional complexity, outcomes, and re-arrest rates and would provide information to tribes on the status of members. Aggregate information could be distributed to the public and for academic research purposes.
- **Develop resources for faith and community leaders to help encourage implementation of 21st Century Policing Task Force recommendations.** To further empower community and faith leaders to support the local implementation of the recommendations put forth by the 21st Century Policing Task Force, we encourage the Administration to develop a factsheet that faith and community leaders could use with local law enforcement. This factsheet would include questions that faith

and community leaders could ask to encourage accountability and transparency by local law enforcement. This tool will enable us to work with local law enforcement to identify ways we can support local leaders as gaps in implementation are identified. Furthermore, we encourage the Task Force to set up a reporting mechanism where local faith and community leaders who use the factsheet can share what they have learned with the Task Force, and report any malpractice on behalf of local law enforcement agencies. We encourage the Task Force to actively elicit feedback from communities and to use that feedback as they consider technical assistance and fiscal support for local communities. As a part of grant applications, preference could be given to local law agencies who report that they healthily and meaningfully engage with faith and community leaders.

- **Provide clear regulations and guidance about what state and local law enforcement agencies are required to report under the 2014 Death in Custody Reporting Act.** Though we commend the Administration for supporting the 2014 Death in Custody Reporting Act, data collected as a result of this legislation remains difficult to understand. In many cases, state and local law enforcement agencies are interpreting the data collection requirements under the law in different ways, which limits our ability to identify which state and local law enforcement agencies are engaging in discriminatory and unconstitutional policing that disproportionately depletes monetary and social resources from lower-income communities of color. As faith and community leaders, we believe that the Department of Justice should clearly outline the definition of what is meant by “in custody” and provide regulations detailing the type of data to be collected and reported, while also providing guidance on how agencies should report this data to the Department. We believe that outlining these two components would allow the DOJ to receive the most accurate information available and ensure that racial injustice and unconstitutional policing is being addressed in the implementation of this statute.
- **Increase data collection on law enforcement practices and partner with faith and community leaders to ensure that communities disproportionately affected by mass arrest and incarceration can access this data.** Data collection is a critical component of increasing accountability and trust so that there can be collaboration between law enforcement system and community based leaders, including faith leaders. We applaud the Administration’s efforts to improve the relationship between citizens and police through uses of data that increase transparency, build community trust, and strengthen accountability through the Police Data Initiative. We recognize the important voluntary work by more and more law enforcement agencies to make data available to communities they represent. Another example that we find commendable is the addition of Accountability Measures to the Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program in 2015. These measures require grantees to describe how they will involve community partners and to use evidence-based models. This effort is a helpful response to community calls for data to be transparent so that systemic problems can be identified and addressed. For all the data being collected by the federal government and by state and local law enforcement that uses federal funding, including data on use and enforcement of parole, steps should be taken to make this data as available and easily accessible to the public as possible; individual community leaders should be able to review and access data about the law enforcement and criminal justice systems in their local communities. We believe that the Department should work closely with faith and community leaders to ensure that leaders in communities disproportionately affected by mass arrest and incarceration are able to access the data and have the tools they need to analyze this data. As a part of these efforts, faith and community based groups should be made more aware of what data is collected

by the federal government. The Administration should also work with faith-based and community partners to elicit feedback regarding gaps in the data considered necessary to support collaboration and build trust. This feedback should also provide opportunities for faith and community leaders to know if their respective communities are not collecting data they consider necessary or if they believe the data collected does not reflect their experience in the local community. In addition, we encourage the Administration to use data, like the data collected through the JAG Accountability Measures, to determine what training that JAG Program and other discretionary funding recipients from the Department of Justice should receive. This training could also be made available to the public to provide benefits for entities not receiving JAG money and inform community and faith leaders education of training provided to groups who receive Justice Discretionary funding. Furthermore, the data could be used to establish reasonable requirements for JAG funding applicants to answer during the application process. Lastly, we affirm the opportunity for the Department of Justice to make more use of consent decrees to eliminate discriminatory practices, and where necessary, litigate using Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, which states that any program or activity receiving federal funding participating in discriminatory behavior is subject to the termination or refusal of continued federal assistance.

- **Increase connections between faith-based and community leaders and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement through community liaisons.** We commend the President and the Department of Homeland Security for laying out plans to fix our broken immigration system. We understand and support the efforts of the Administration to expand the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program in Central America and the Central American Minors program that is already providing a safe mechanism for parents of Central American youth to seek refugee status. We strongly encourage the Administration to continue these efforts and to work with faith communities to help successfully resettle these populations. We also commend the action by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for the creation of new positions that will serve as community liaisons with stakeholders as part of an initiative aimed at increasing local community engagement across the country.

We encourage the Administration to use these community liaison officers to promote more communication and community engagement with faith and community leaders. We believe this increased communication will help low-income populations disproportionately affected by our broken immigration system to understand their legal status and how that legal status affects their involvement in their community. We also want to encourage opportunities for faith and community leaders to liaise with ICE when they hear about actions in local communities that do not align with Administration guidance. ICE officers should invite faith and community leaders to share how ICE actions at the local level are being perceived by the community. They should work with those liaisons to dispel myths and increase awareness of ICE responses to community concerns by demonstrating that ICE is not transgressing the law but rather is following the law and is endeavoring to act as humanely as possible. We believe this work will increase trust, accountability, and collaboration between ICE and those affected by our broken immigration system and will also limit disparate and unintentional impacts on low-income immigrant populations.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION EXAMINE AND ADDRESS RACIAL EQUITY THROUGH FEDERAL AGENCIES.

We must contend with structural inequality faced by communities of color at every level of government to end persistent levels of poverty and hunger in the United States. Racial equity is a framework that acknowledges racial disparities and promotes equal outcomes from federal policies and practice. Failing to acknowledge the current barriers faced by vulnerable communities in relation to their more affluent counterparts will only exacerbate the financial insecurity disproportionately experienced by communities of color.

Racial equity serves a prism through which we can examine and address the varying challenges of different racial groups instead of assuming that all groups are facing the same constraints. Using this framework enables policies and programs to more concretely reduce inequality between communities. For example, we applaud the Administration's efforts use of data for housing policies for low-income communities to show that low-income communities of color experience a higher frequency of discrimination than low-income white communities. By applying a racial equity lens, policies and programs on housing can better address this disparity for communities of color and can provide the necessary resources and systems to counter this imbalance with the following strategies:

- **Provide training on implicit racial bias, the racial equity framework, and strategies to increase racial equity for agencies and staff.** Federal agencies and staff should understand how racial inequality can exacerbate high levels of poverty for many communities of color. To facilitate this understanding, agencies and staff should receive training on how to identify implicit racial bias and how it can be embedded in their agency's policies and programs. This form of education serves as an integral component in reducing racial inequality at every level of employment. All federal staff, including political appointees and civil servants, should receive this initial training. To the extent of the President's authority, this training should be mandated for all federal staff. Agencies and individual staff who are designing, overseeing, and implementing policies and programs more directly impacting low-income families and communities of color should receive ongoing training. We encourage the Administration to work toward ensuring that the training is effective and is contextualized to specific agencies.
- **Provide for racial equity analysis of federal programs and policies.** Racial equity analysis of federal policies and programs will be informed by the training for federal agencies and staff detailed above. We believe that ongoing training and support on policies and programs can help staff abandon existing policies and programs that have proven to be ineffective in favor of new programs that promote racial equity. Members of the Interagency Working Group (IWG) to coordinate poverty alleviation efforts (see earlier recommendation) could receive training and implement racial equity frameworks in the development of its programs as well. We recommend the Administration prepare a report described existing efforts to implement racial equity policies across the Federal agencies. This report would increase awareness of existing efforts toward this goal, particularly for faith and community leaders, and would inform the replication of efforts at state and local levels.
- **Urge the President to sign an executive order to "ban-the-box" for contractors.** We commend the President for urging Congress to "ban the box" in federal employment, directing the Office of Personnel Management to take action to modify the rules to delay inquiries of criminal records in the hiring process, and officially banning the box for all federal employees. We recognize that lower-income communities of color are disproportionately targeted and incarcerated by law enforcement agencies and consequently experience higher levels of employer discrimination following release.



We also recognize the opportunity to build on best practices for hiring returning citizens as well as the opportunity to further promote the Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program. To further encourage new contractors to hire returning citizens and commend existing contractors for opening their doors to this vulnerable population, we are urging the Administration to issue an executive order banning the box for federal contractor applications and to require that government contractors implement the ban the box requirement to all of their subcontractors. This would include the codification of the EEOC's guidance on the use of arrests and conviction records in employment decisions and the delay criminal history inquiry to the conditional offer stage of hiring.

WE RECOMMEND THAT THE ADMINISTRATION COMMIT TO INCREASED ENGAGEMENT WITH FORUMS THAT PROMOTE RACIAL RECONCILIATION AND RESTORATION.

Racial and economic tension has plagued communities of color and our nation for decades. We commend this Administration for taking steps to speak out on issues of racial discrimination and highlight policies that exacerbate racial and economic inequality, especially those rooted in the so-called “War on Drugs.” As faith and community leaders, we believe that fully resolving any social ill requires that we not only acknowledge the disparities that exist, which the Administration has been vocal about in both words and action, but that we also engage in reconciliation and restoration efforts. Reconciliation can take place in many forms and often starts with conversations involving diverse communities. The Administration has started this process with some communities and we would invite the opportunity to widen this space by committing to participate in the following meetings and forums:

- **Commit to robust participation in meetings like the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs.** Racial targeting and discrimination during the “War on Drugs” has had a disastrous impact on many communities of color in America, often driving deep levels of poverty and inequality for black and brown families. Rather than continue the trend of zero tolerance and mandatory minimums, we must rely on what research has demonstrated. Every relevant study conducted in recent years has revealed that poverty coupled with inequality leads to the proliferation of drugs. Therefore, criminalizing drug users is counterproductive, as it fails to address the root of the problem. Developing restorative policies and mechanisms that tackle poverty, inequality, and addiction are proven to support and empower vulnerable and impoverished communities. Hence, we encourage President Obama to take his domestic criminal justice agenda to the global stage and use meetings like the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on Drugs in New York as a platform to encourage world leaders to seriously re-imagine drug policy. In meetings like these, we encourage the attendance of President Barack Obama or Vice President Joe Biden or very senior Administration officials (e.g., , Secretary of State John Kerry, U.N. Ambassador Samantha Powers) at these meetings to present a strong, public health- and justice-focused message highlighting the Administration’s and other national actions that have moved the U.S. away from the traditional drug war tactics and toward reform.
- **Commit to co-host a racial equity summit that invites federal and local stakeholders to discuss strategies and best practices that yield racial equity through employment, policing, education, and other institutions directly and indirectly contributing to poverty for lower-income communities of color.** We encourage the Administration to partner with our Council to bring together a selection of local communities, federal agency representatives, and Administrative staff to discuss these issues. We believe that inviting teams within local communities currently working toward this goal would be helpful, including but not limited to local cohorts participating in the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative, Promise Zones Initiative, and the Council for Women and Girls. This conversation can serve as an educational opportunity for representatives from federal agencies and the Administration and community teams to learn about best practices of racial equity, racial restoration, and economic empowerment in other cities. This conversation can also serve to support the relationship building and implementation of racial equity in the work of each local team and can serve as a learning platform for federal agencies and Administration staff to learn how racial equity has been implemented in a local context to achieve restoration for many low income communities of color.

- **Encourage all states and tribes to engage local communities in discussions of racial equity in education, especially considering disparities affecting Native American populations.** We applaud the Administration for passing the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which includes a requirement for states to consult with tribes on state plans for Title I funds. We acknowledge the need to disseminate information about the consultation and to implement new policies that incorporate an equity lens in instruction, assessment, and evaluation among educational institutions and school districts with high Native American populations. Often families, local educators, and community organizations in these communities are left out of conversations and decision making that directly impacts their children. Other schools with high Native American populations operate outside areas of tribal jurisdiction, which would limit the effect of state or tribal consultation. We suggest that the Administration host a series of listening events within representative communities across the U.S. to inform students, families, community leaders, policy makers, and local school boards about the new regulations and how they affect learning opportunities for Native American students in a way that supports their success. We suggest these discussions include how schools can use ESSA to their advantage to incorporate the most innovative practices such as competency-based learning, social emotional learning, college preparation, and new accountability measures to ensure an educational environment of equity and empowerment for Native American students. Finally, we suggest these discussions include community input from students, families, and local leaders to encourage more relevant, equitable, and excellent educational options informed directly by individual community strengths and resources and to facilitate open conversations about what these schools could look like. Schools that are designed with community strengths and resources as assets have a strong chance of succeeding in their aim to provide an excellent and relevant education to diverse and vulnerable students. Once all the meetings have been hosted, we encourage the Administration to work with the Department of Education to compile the findings from community forums, which will share and highlight efforts taking place nationally to support the implementation of ESSA. The findings should be shared with local policy makers and State Education Agencies prior to the full implementation of ESSA.
- **Incorporate youth voices and solutions to reduce youth violence.** Building on the Indian Law & Order Commission’s report, “A Roadmap for Making Native America Safer,” we recommend the Department of Interior immediately convene youth and non-profits throughout the Generation Indigenous Network (GEN-I Network) to create solutions that address these needs through a strengths-based lens. GEN-I partners would establish culturally relevant and restorative justice policy recommendations for Native American youth and adults that can be used as alternates to the existing court process, detention, and incarceration that don’t address the complexity of issues found in federal and tribal courts and prisons. These processes should be consistent with traditional Native American practices of restitution, culture, healing, community service, mental health treatment and counseling, and probation to address juvenile delinquency and crimes without an over-reliance on detention and incarceration.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION TAKE STEPS TO EXPAND GRANTS OF CLEMENCY IN THE FORM OF COMMUTATIONS, PARDONS, AND EXPUNGEMENTS AND TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR INDIVIDUALS TO APPLY AND QUALIFY FOR THESE VARIOUS FORMS OF RELIEF.

As faith and community leaders, we strongly support the practice of forgiving and offering second chances. We believe that commutations, pardons, and expungements offer currently and formerly incarcerated individuals a second chance at employment, familial engagement, and civic involvement, which are all critical factors in addressing chronic poverty in low-income communities of color. Executive clemency, in the form of commutations and pardons, was designed as a broad and exclusive tool to allow the executive branch to address unfair punishments, confer mercy, recognize rehabilitation, and rein in the results of an imbalance or excessive use of prosecutorial power. Unfortunately, clemency has fallen into relative disuse for several decades, at the same time that public appetite for criminalization and incarceration increased. Nevertheless, Presidents Gerald Ford²⁴ and Jimmy Carter²⁵ announced programs to allow amnesty and automatic pardons for draft dodgers, demonstrating the ability to correct for systemic overreach and to use the clemency tool in the aggregate. In these instances, the presidents made blanket announcements and let the Department of Justice handle the effectuation of the bulk pardons.

Presently, the administrative burden for applying for executive clemency falls on incarcerated or formerly incarcerated individuals who have limited access to monetary and legal resources. Typically, candidates for pardons must have served their entire sentences, including post-release supervision, and waited five years to even apply. Moreover, wait times after applying for a pardon or commutation are typically in the two- to seven-year range.

It is unfair for people who deserve clemency to languish in prisons and years after, faced with a cumbersome process and an interminable wait with no help in sight. These are people who have been systematically over-incarcerated under policies that are now in disfavor and never were sensible, effective, or right. While these people—mostly men of color—are suffering delayed justice, their children are more likely to be in single-parent homes and experience hunger and poverty at higher rates. Individuals who have been released are often unable to fully return to society because they are routinely denied employment, housing, and other opportunities. Every effort should be made to make it easier for these people to return to their communities and be successful in rebuilding their lives.

We acknowledge and are grateful that the President commuted the sentences of more than 650 individuals—more than the previous ten Presidents combined. We also are thankful that the President has met in-person with individuals whose lives have been changed as a result of these decisions and listened to their stories. We commend the President for his trailblazing work to tackle the inequalities embedded in our criminal justice system. We also applaud the Administration for acknowledging the role of the policies and practices from the “War on Drugs” in fueling our current system of mass incarceration. Research has shown that lower-income men of color disproportionately have been the targets of this war, with greater arrest rates, higher conviction rates, and more stringent sentences for the same crimes, even though communities of color and their white counterparts use and sell drugs at approximately the same rates.

We nevertheless believe that to realize the intent and promise of executive clemency, more action by the Administration is needed. The appetite for using the remedy must be resurrected to aid our system in delivering justice and restoration. Administrative burdens can be lifted and increased accessibility to the executive clemency and expungement processes can be granted. In this year of jubilee and mercy, we believe there is a powerful opportunity

for the Administration to take steps to expand eligibility for commutations, pardons, and expungement and to make it easier for current and former offenders to receive these remedies. To take advantage of this opportunity, we propose the following actions:

- **Encourage the President to create a structural solution, such as an executive clemency commission or other advisory board, using a racial equity lens.** Ideally, this bipartisan commission would have diverse membership among system stakeholders, would not be housed in a department associated with law enforcement functions, and would review cases and make recommendations to the President. Many states use some form of commission or board to make initial recommendations to governors. These boards ensure that the process of considering applications is ongoing and that various perspectives are considered. If a commission is not established, we encourage the Administration to consider moving the function of the Pardon Attorney from its current placement in the Department of Justice. This would address the inherent tension of a prosecutorial agency being charged with revisiting its own convictions.
- **Clarify the role of clemency as a proper means to rectify prosecutorial excesses and restore consistency and fairness across the justice system, and exhort states to undertake similar programs to use clemency more robustly.** The Administration should seek to re-educate the public about the proper historical role of clemency, even as he has demonstrated its more robust use. By continuing to meet with commutation recipients, the President is making a bold statement about his efforts to expand the use of clemency. We also encourage the Administration to continue to share the individual stories of commutation recipients to better inform the public on the role of mercy and redemption in our criminal justice system. Furthermore, we encourage the Administration to look for ways to encourage more clemency actions at the state level by educating the states about the need for an expanded clemency role and opportunities to address over-incarceration at the state level, where more prisoners are located.

In addition to these actions, we encourage the President and the Administration to provide a public response to some of the following ideas related to making clemency a regular means to rectify prosecutorial excesses and to restore consistency and fairness across the justice system.

- a) **Expand eligibility to receive commutations and pardons, and consider Targeted Categorical Grants and other ways to streamline the process.** Under a special program called the Clemency Initiative that was announced by the Obama Administration in 2014, certain incarcerated individuals can apply to get pardoned or receive a commuted sentence if they: would have received a shorter sentence if they were convicted today; have served at least 10 years of their total sentence; maintained good conduct throughout the prison term; and don't have a violent past record or ties to drug cartels. The outcomes of this program have already been favorable and we encourage the Administration to explore options to expand these efforts even further. In view of the purposes of clemency and the unconscionable sentences that have routinely been handed out in the last few decades, we recommend that the President expand the swath of cases eligible under his program and strive to reduce the burden to file and to process these applications. Specifically, we ask the President to consider providing a Targeted Categorical Grant of commutations and pardons to specific sets of prisoners and former prisoners, along the lines of the broad grants established by Presidents Ford and Carter. Under this mechanism, the President and his Administration could identify the categories of offenders whose sentences are by definition too long for the crime and others who, after serving time, have reintegrated sufficiently to merit removal of the cloud of conviction. For these individuals, the President could issue a categorical pardon

targeted to those who are not likely to pose a public safety risk, while including any additional exceptions considered to be necessary. This method of grant allows for simple implementation because it is based on membership in the specified categories rather than the strength of individual, burdensome applications.

- b) **Reduce burdens on applications for clemency.** There is an opportunity to explore means of shifting the burden for filing or perfecting applications to the government and away from individuals. Ideally, some of these could be announced *en masse* as Targeted Categorical Grants that would be administered after the fact to any qualifying individual, based on the records already held by the government. At the least, we request that the Administration explore technological solutions to reduce the burden to apply for clemency, such as an app to demonstrate qualification for relief. We believe the government, using the information they, can develop a more streamlined process, which will save effort and resources for all parties. We note that the present systems require legal support to marshal arguments and then legal review to determine merit, whereas the solutions we suggest reduce the need for persuasion and rely more heavily on data-driven results. Granting clemency to federal death row prisoners, which would commute prisoners' sentences to life without parole, should also be considered. The federal death penalty suffers from the same problems of racial disparity, disproportionate impact on the poor, and prosecutorial overreach that non-death penalty cases do.
- c) **Restoration of Civil Rights.** We encourage the Administration to explore the possibility of Presidential restoration of civil rights to ensure that people who have completed their term of imprisonment are not further deprived of rights or unduly hampered in their reintegration. As we understand it, this remedy is used at the state level on a regular basis to remove certain collateral consequences of a conviction that are often imposed by state law. Since state governors cannot pardon federal convictions, they can instead restore an applicant's civil rights without issuing a pardon. We ask the Administration to respond to the idea that the President can correlatively restore civil rights to federal prisoners upon release, individually or collectively, eliminating the impact of collateral consequence laws and ensuring smoother reintegration.

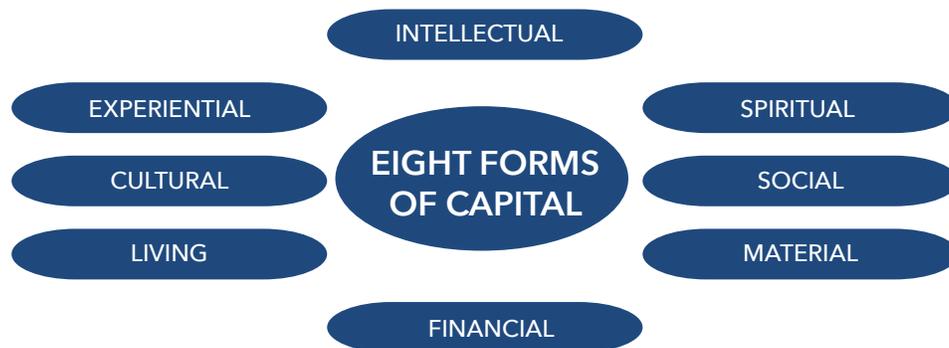


RECOMMENDATIONS
TO STRENGTHEN
GOVERNMENT
APPROACHES AND
PROGRAMS FOR
ADDRESSING POVERTY
AND INEQUALITY

RECOMMENDATIONS TO STRENGTHEN GOVERNMENT APPROACHES AND PROGRAMS FOR ADDRESSING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

Poverty and inequality cannot be solved by traditional bureaucratic solutions, which entail generalized approaches executed by traditional command-and-control structures to address social ills with simple, linear causes. Instead, poverty and inequality are complex problems with multiple and interlocking causes and effects²⁶.

Just as there are multiple forms of capital, there are multiple forms of poverty²⁷ as described in the chart below. Material poverty is often accompanied and compounded by scarcity of other forms of capital as well, including social and emotional capital. Individuals and families in poverty suffer not only from material deprivation, but they also experience disproportionate rates of stress, emotional harm and trauma, fractured relationships, and diminished social ties and networks. All these factors are exacerbated by discrimination on the basis of race, gender, and other characteristics. The cumulative impacts of these complexities impede the resiliency and ability of these individuals to recover from material poverty.



Solving the growing range of complex and interwoven problems related to poverty and inequality therefore requires more than material inputs alone and it requires more than government solutions alone, in that the government is one player – albeit a significant player – in a complex ecosystem. In order to effectively combat poverty, the government must not only bring to bear resources, but must also serve as a connector and enabler. This requires utilizing government-provided resources as seed capital for catalyzing additional social linkages and fortifying non-material inner assets within communities for sustainable external and internal transformation. This kind of skillful intervention requires a government that is less focused on top-down “delivery” of services and material inputs alone and one that is; more interconnected; built on deep relationships with the communities and individuals it serves; dedicated to supporting “bottom-up” growth of social ties and horizontal peer-to-peer support systems; committed to furthering responsive problem-solving within and among communities and individuals; and focused on more holistic solutions and holistic definitions of well-being and success.

At the macro level, this reorientation requires more interconnected public service systems that serve human needs across departmental and programmatic silos and measure results in more holistic and deeper ways. At the local and individual level, it requires creating tools and engagement methods that foster meaningful social connections and peer-to-peer networks of trust, shared information, and support within communities and among delivery agents of government programs. It also requires deep relationships in place of shallow transactions between frontline service professionals and those whom anti-poverty programs are meant to serve. Such relational, responsive strategies can involve personalized services, greater



consistency of personnel, and a nurtured delivery staff with strong interpersonal and emotional awareness skills. This more holistic approach can also require coaching, mentoring, new forms of training and human engagement practices, and case-management methods that assist individuals and families in navigating fragmented social-services systems. If interactions are highly time-constrained and there is a high churn of frontline staff within services, relationships are likely to be transactional and perfunctory in nature. In order for deeper relationships to develop, with the potential to transform lives and strengthen communities, much greater consistency of nurtured personnel in frontline services is necessary.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION CONTINUE TO RECOGNIZE AND ADDRESS THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES IN POVERTY.

We applaud the Administration for recognizing the emotional and psychic harms faced by communities living with poverty and for bringing a trauma lens to anti-poverty efforts. In particular, the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) are engaged in an ongoing partnership to address complex, interpersonal trauma and improve social-emotional health among children known to child welfare systems. SAMHSA also has led the way on trauma-informed care and community development efforts to address the emotional and social needs of trauma-exposed children, women, individuals, and communities.

As part of its anti-poverty strategy, we urge the Administration to continue to provide for and prioritize tools that support emotional healing, self-care, emotional resilience, stress reduction, self- and other-awareness, and healthy relationships for individuals, families, and communities, including mindfulness, cognitive behavioral therapy, reflective listening, reflective structured dialogue, and other appropriate strategies. We also urge the Administration to evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs incorporating such methods for individuals and families to further develop evidence-based assessments of effective, appropriate tools for care.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT AGENTS OF SERVICE DELIVERY.

We can best actualize the vast potential of government to uplift individuals and communities by focusing on the moment of human interaction when the constituent comes face to face with the government. That moment can either be a transactional, bureaucratic exchange involving straight delivery of material benefits or the first of a series of transformational interactions that use government support to seed and support a dynamic, rich network of human relationships.

For government programs to move toward this transformational interaction, government must equip workers who interact with the public with skills to deliver uplifting interactions and build relationships that lead to sustainable change. Faith-based and neighborhood groups have long recognized that the efficacy of efforts to serve impacted population depends on the quality of the interaction and the relationship. Only if we invest in the non-material needs of frontline delivery agents will those agents in turn be able to serve the non-material needs of beneficiaries while also delivering material aid and supporting communities' ability to support themselves. Those who work in service delivery should be empowered to engage in a positive way with communities, families, and individuals and be valued as crucial agents for change. They must be considered the most important interface with real people, with the potential to significantly transform a person's experience with an anti-poverty program.

We recommend that the Administration take the following steps to improve self-care, emotional resilience, stress reduction, and self- and other-awareness, and to meet other non-material needs for frontline workers.

- **Provide support and tools for self-care.** When one cares for oneself, one is able to care for others in a more sustainable, transformative way. The Administration should create and deploy curricula for frontline workers about mindfulness and other methods of self-care, including emotional resilience, stress reduction, self- and other-awareness, and emotional intelligence. The Administration should pilot efforts to deploy these curricula through coaching and training for those who are the face of poverty programs to the people those programs serve.
- **Build cohorts of support among frontline workers.** We applaud the Administration's work being piloted through the Community Solutions Team within the Office of Management and Budget to develop cohorts of frontline delivery agents. Through training and building a community of practice among the cohort, the pilot aims to enable these professionals to form strong relationships with one another and turn to each other for support. Recognizing the importance of self-care for these workers, the Administration should equip these already-assembled cohorts with the curricula described above and additional tools and training in collective practices to help cohort members mentally and emotionally prepare themselves to be agents of transformation. The Administration should also assess the feasibility of expanding this pilot to the workers who staff every major anti-poverty program.
- **Expand support cohorts beyond government employees.** Because faith-based and community organizations play such an important role in the delivery of services to alleviate poverty, the Administration should expand its pilot efforts in building cohorts of frontline government workers to offer similar supports to those who disperse government-funded poverty aid through state, local, and tribal institutions and faith-based and community organizations.



WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY AND DATA TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS OF SUPPORT.

In order to effectively combat poverty, the government must not only bring to bear resources, but also serve as a connector and enabler. This requires linking personnel within interconnected local ecosystems, including individuals, faith-based and community organizations, community leaders, service providers on the state and local level, and public institutions, to utilize government-provided resources as seed capital for catalyzing additional social linkages and fortifying non-material assets within communities. Technology and data science offer new opportunities to accomplish these goals by fostering deeper relationships and networks of support, both for frontline workers and the people and communities they serve. The Administration should take advantage of these new opportunities to help build social capital and the capacity of emerging networks on the ground by employing the following strategies:

- **Fortify social networks among the beneficiaries of anti-poverty programs.** Social networking platforms are beginning to provide low-income people and communities with a more reliable way to remain connected even when housing instability or unreliable telephone access disrupts traditional modes of communication. Recognizing the important role technology can and does play in fortifying social capital in communities impacted by economic poverty, the Administration should explore creating a peer-to-peer system of communication for those who receive material aid from the government to strengthen the social networks of beneficiaries of anti-poverty programs. The Administration should also seek out ways to leverage existing social networking platforms to do the same by piloting projects targeted toward specific communities of color that are tailored to the needs and strengths of those communities in particular.

- **Develop peer-to-peer systems of support for frontline workers through shared success stories and interlinkages.** In order to scale up the cohort support work outlined above, we recommend that the Office of Science & Technology Policy explore ways to use technology to develop and launch peer-to-peer systems of support for frontline workers. These technology solutions should increase the capacity of frontline workers to support each other day-to-day in becoming transformational agents for the populations and communities they serve through the means sharing stories of hope, renewal, and resilience, building social capital, and creating stronger interlinkages and connections.
- **Conduct a social network analysis.** Too often, community engagement by the government leans heavily on local figures with political connections or those who have established relationships with federally funded entities. This overreliance on known actors locks out many important voices and overlooks robust networks and dynamic leaders in low-income communities. The Administration should replicate the project led by the Department of Homeland Security in Miami. In partnership with academia, the project provided capacity building and technical assistance for a number of low-income communities, specifically targeting communities of color, to identify, strengthen, and improve networks of relationships in those communities in planning and implementing anti-poverty efforts. This approach provides the Administration opportunities to better leverage the disciplines of data visualization and network science, which includes social network analysis, to help identify and amplify impacts of existing anti-poverty efforts.
- **Improve integration of data systems.** We applaud the Administration's efforts to integrate administrative data systems across the country in order to increase awareness and uptake of supports aimed at helping individuals and families climb out of poverty. Guided by human-centered design and the insights of social and behavioral sciences, data systems can be improved if information related to an individual is linked across agencies and government funding streams to present a holistic picture of that individual's needs and eligibility for public supports. In particular, we look forward to the day when an individual may learn in one instance of the full range of government services and benefits for which they and their family are eligible.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION EXPLORE DEEPER AND MORE HOLISTIC WAYS TO MEASURE SUCCESS AND COMMUNITY AS WELL AS NATIONAL WELL-BEING.

We will not succeed at ending poverty in this country if we continue to measure our programs by accounting metrics rather than human outcomes or if we assess our overall well-being simply on the basis of economic or financial capital. We recommend that the Administration convene a series of meetings to discuss more holistic ways to measure success and wellness in the implementation of anti-poverty programs nationwide²⁸.

- **Develop and support more holistic indices of national well-being.** GDP growth is important, but it is in no way a sufficient measurement of our nation's wellness. We recommend that the Council of Economic Advisors, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Treasury Department host a conversation with Administration officials and domestic and international experts on the development of alternative performance metrics to discuss a broader indication of wellness on a national scale and the feasibility of publicly releasing holistic well-being indices in addition to GDP. In particular, this conversation should explore ways of measuring and reflecting multiple forms of capital, including economic, social, natural, informational, spiritual, cultural, and experiential among others, and inequalities of capital distribution that may be linked to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other characteristics associated with persistent forms of discrimination in our country.
- **Move grant metrics from transaction to transformation.** We cannot succeed in eliminating poverty if we continue to incentivize governments and organizations providing services to low-income people and communities to focus simply on the number of transactions they complete rather than the overall effect their interventions have on the people they serve. The Administration should host a public roundtable conversation to discuss ways to integrate a transformative and relational approach into program and grant metrics. This discussion should include domestic and international experts rethinking how performance management systems can measure program impact and transformation and state and local stakeholders and community leaders who are doing anti-poverty work and focus on quality of outcome over quantity of transaction. Furthermore, this meeting should include a discussion of how we can ensure our programs are not overly focused on the science of accounting to the detriment of the art of human relations, which requires trust and real social connections.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION HIGHLIGHT AND SOLIDIFY PROGRESS OF RELATIONAL APPROACHES TO ADDRESSING POVERTY AND INEQUALITY.

Innovative governmental and non-governmental actors are incorporating a relational model in poverty alleviation work on an experimental basis²⁹. We recommend that the Administration initiate a comprehensive review of actions that are already being taken across the United States and abroad to shift from transactional to transformational models in poverty alleviation. The following approaches should be considered:

- **Host a public forum on best practices.** Some state, local, and tribal governments have already begun to shift toward a relational model by changing the ways they set goals, measure progress, and coordinate efforts to the benefit of the populations they serve. At one such collaboration held annually by Alliance for Innovation, the “Transforming Local Government Conference,” state, local, and tribal governments share successful case studies of programs they have implemented to create a “systemic mindset for delivering services” and an ecosystem to maximize their greatest resource: their public servants. Many faith-based and community organizations, notably the Salvation Army, have also been spearheading efforts to move from transactional to transformational models. Sharing lessons learned from this work would encourage state, local, and tribal actors, along with faith-based and community organizations, to continue and expand efforts to revitalize low-income communities by focusing on relationships. The Administration should host a similar public forum to highlight the best practices and pioneering efforts to shift toward relational approaches in poverty alleviation programs and release a public record of lessons learned and best practices developed from that conversation.
- **Conduct a review of what’s worked at the federal level.** We applaud the Administration’s early leadership in investing in rigorous evaluation and disseminating the results. Part of this work has included: establishing and developing Offices of Evaluation; establishing and developing online clearinghouses based at agencies featuring evidence-based interventions; and establishing a “place-based” approach to federal programming and budgeting as an important first step toward leveraging federal investments in an integrated way, on a regional scale, and in a particular place to have the most transformative impact. We also laud the work done by the Department of Veterans Affairs in collaboration with government agencies, housing providers, and faith-based and community organizations to alleviate homelessness among our veterans by implementing a Housing First approach. This work yielded impressive results by recognizing the inseparable nature of the multiple problems facing those on the cusp of homelessness and by focusing on outcomes instead of outputs, and contributed significantly to eradicating homelessness in a few major cities. We believe this holistic and recipient-oriented approach can and should be applied to other government programs, and that the lessons learned through these efforts must not be lost with personnel change at the end of this Administration. We recommend that the Administration develop a report detailing what has worked in shifting the federal government towards a relational or holistic rather than transactional or domain-specific approach with low-income communities, highlighting that the approach encourages measuring outcomes rather than outputs and has a particular focus on the Housing First initiative and the Promise Zones Initiative. This report should also outline administrative, statutory, and logistical roadblocks these efforts encountered in moving away from a transaction focus, along with assessments of how those roadblocks were overcome or could be overcome in the future.



- **Share stories of success.** Too often, our communication about poverty programs conveys hopelessness and a sense that poverty can never truly be alleviated. However, major strides have been made during this Administration that have made life better for many low-income communities and Americans. We recommend that the Administration amplify the successes of Promise Zones, Housing First, and other relationship-focused programs that have benefited from this new approach by creating infographics of accomplishments and sharing success stories, reminding both those who deliver government services and the country as a whole that progress is possible if we focus less on transaction and more on transformation.

WE RECOMMEND THE ADMINISTRATION BREAK DOWN SILOS AND CREATE MORE INTERCONNECTED SERVICE NETWORKS.

People and communities are more than the sums of their distinct parts, and our approach to poverty should reflect this. We recommend that the Administration take steps to integrate anti-poverty work at the federal, state, local and tribal levels to create more synergy and to forge deeper relationships among governmental and community-based service providers. Dismantling silos will position agencies to better leverage the material aid we invest in poverty programs, acting as fertilizer for the growth of non-economic forms of capital. Strategies should include the following:

- **Leverage the Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.** The staff of the Centers for Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships are in a unique position to understand the importance of relationships and to encourage other players within the Administration to work within the transformational model. The Administration should task the Centers to come together to explore additional ways to support moving from transaction models to transformation models in their respective departments and to share existing best practices they may already be deploying toward reaching that goal.
- **Foster relationships across programs and providers in high-poverty places.** Following up on the success of the Promise Zones, we recommend that the Administration host a series of place-based forum in key geographic locations, inviting those who do anti-poverty work within local, state, and tribal governments and within faith and community-based organizations to come together to share information, support each other, and build relationships that will outlive each forum.

Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore

Bishop Carroll A. Baltimore is the Senior Pastor of the International Community Baptist Churches, a position he has held since 1984. He is also the current Chairman of Carroll A. Baltimore (C.A.B.) Outreach International Ministries, which he founded in 1992. In addition, Bishop Baltimore also founded the Carroll A. Baltimore Christian Academy and the C.A.B. Non-Formal Education programs for alternative learning and vocational training. He served as the President of the Progressive National Baptist Convention from 2010 to 2014, and he was consecrated the Global Bishop of Recruitment and Expansion for Global United Fellowship in July 2015. Bishop Baltimore received an A.A. from Luther Rice College, a B.I.S. from George Mason University, a D.H.L from Virginia University, a D.Miss from Richmond Virginia Seminary, an M.Th, Th.D. and D.D. from the International University Seminary, a D.Min. from Virginia University Lynchburg, VA, and a Th.B. from Washington Baptist Theological Seminary.

Preeta Bansal

Preeta Bansal is a Lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Media Lab and a Senior Advisor at MIT's Laboratory for Social Machines, positions she has held since 2014. She is also President of Social Emergence Corporation, a not-for-profit founded in May 2015, which focuses on empowering human networks and community relationships. From 2012 to 2013, Ms. Bansal served as a global general counsel for HSBC Holdings. She served on the Council of the Administrative Conference of the United States as a non-government member from December 2011 through 2015 and previously served as a government member and Vice Chairman from 2010 to July 2011. From 2009 to 2011, Ms. Bansal served as General Counsel and Senior Policy Advisor for the Office of Management and Budget. She was Partner and head of the Appellate Litigation Practice at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher and Flom LLP from 2003 to 2009. She served as a member of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom from 2003 to 2009, and as Chair from 2004 to 2005. She was Solicitor General of the State of New York from 1999 to 2001. Early in her legal career, she served as law clerk to United States Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens. Ms. Bansal is a Henry Crown Fellow at the Aspen Institute and a Member of the Council on Foreign Relations. She received a B.A. from Harvard-Radcliffe College and a J.D. from Harvard Law School.

Reverend David Beckmann

Reverend David Beckmann is the President of Bread for the World and Bread for the World Institute, positions he has held since 1991. Rev. Beckmann also serves as President of Alliance to End Hunger, which he founded in 2001. Bread for the World and the Alliance organize nationwide advocacy campaigns to win stronger U.S. government action toward ending hunger in the United States and worldwide. Prior to joining Bread for the World, Rev. Beckmann worked at the World Bank from 1976 to 1991. He was named a World Food Prize Laureate in 2010. Rev. Beckmann currently serves on the United States Agency for International Development's Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative's Trade Advisory Committee on Africa, and the Executive Committee of the Modernizing Foreign Assistance Network. Rev. Beckmann received a B.A. from Yale University, an M.Div from Christ Seminary, and a M.Sc. from the London School of Economics. He also holds five honorary doctorates.

Reverend Traci D. Blackmon

Reverend Traci D. Blackmon is the Acting Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries for The United Church of Christ. She is also a Pastor at Christ the King United Church of Christ in Florissant, Missouri, where she has served since 2009. Reverend Blackmon previously served as Coordinator of Health, Mind, Body, and Spirit for BJC HealthCare, and as Pastor

of Simpson Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbia, Missouri. Reverend Blackmon has thirty years of experience in the healthcare industry and served on The Ferguson Commission. She received a B.S. from Birmingham-Southern College and an M.Div. from Eden Theological Seminary.

Kara Bobroff (Navajo/Lakota)

Kara Bobroff is the Executive Director of the Native American Community Academy (NACA), which she founded in 2005. She is also the Executive Director of the NACA-Inspired Schools Network, established in 2014. Ms. Bobroff previously served in several roles within the public education system, including special education teacher at Jefferson Middle School from 1992 to 1996, Assistant Principal at Taft Middle School from 1996 to 1998, Dean of Students at Miller Creek Middle School from 1998 to 2002, and Principal of Newcomb Middle School from 2003 to 2004. Ms. Bobroff was an Echoing Green Fellow in 2005 and is a current Pahara-Aspen Education Fellow. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Learning Alliance of New Mexico, Keres Children's Learning Center, Harvard's Urban Principal's Center, Southwest Youth Services, and is a Community Advisory Council member for University of New Mexico Hospital. Ms. Bobroff received a B.A., M.A., and Ed.S. from the University of New Mexico.

Reverend Jennifer Butler

Reverend Jennifer Butler is the CEO of Faith in Public Life (FPL), a position she has held since 2005. Rev. Butler is the co-leader of Iona DC: A Christian Community, where she has served since 2013. Before leading FPL, she represented the Presbyterian Church at the United Nations from 1996 to 2005. Rev. Butler was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Belize from 1989 to 1991. She received a B.A. from the College of William and Mary, an M.S.W. from Rutgers University, and a Master of Divinity at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Rachel Held Evans

Rachel Held Evans is a Christian blogger and the author of *Faith Unraveled*, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, and *Searching for Sunday*. In addition, Ms. Evans speaks at retreats, conferences, universities, and churches across the country. She has been featured on NPR, Slate, The BBC, The Washington Post, The Huffington Post, CNN, The View, and The Today Show, and in 2012, she was named one of Christianity Today's "50 Women to Watch." Ms. Evans received a B.A. from Bryan College.

Rabbi Steve Gutow

Rabbi Steve Gutow was recently appointed to the position of Visiting Scholar at NYU to organize a nation-wide interfaith advocacy program in selected cities. He is also a political advisor for J Street to advise on certain Congressional races in the 2016 election. Prior to serving in these positions, Rabbi Gutow served for more than ten years, until January 1, 2016, as president and CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the public policy and community relations coordinating agency of the American Jewish community. Rabbi Gutow has helped lead the "Fighting Poverty with Faith" interfaith initiatives since 2008 and the anti-hunger Seder events at the U.S. Capitol since 2009. From 2008 to 2009, Rabbi Gutow served as Chair of the Save Darfur Coalition. Rabbi Gutow is the founding Executive Director of the National Jewish Democratic Council, which was founded in 1990. Rabbi Gutow has served as a member of the Board of Faith in Public Life from 2010 to 2013. He currently serves as Chair of the Board of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment and has served on its executive committee since 2012. Rabbi Gutow received a B.A. and J.D. from the University of Texas at Austin and an M.H.L. from the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

Reverend Adam Hamilton

Reverend Adam Hamilton is the founding Pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, the largest United Methodist Church in the United States. Reverend Hamilton is the author of 23 books, including *Making Sense of the Bible*. Reverend Hamilton speaks on leadership across the country, and in 2013, he delivered the sermon at the Inaugural Prayer Service held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Reverend Hamilton received a B.A. from Oral Roberts University and an M.Div from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

Aziza Hasan

Aziza Hasan is the Executive Director of NewGround: Muslim Jewish Partnership for Change, an organization she helped co-found in 2006. From 2006 to 2012, Ms. Hasan served as the Southern California Director and Government Relations Director for the Muslim Public Affairs Council. From 2001 to 2006, she was a Mental Health Worker at Prairie View Inc. Ms. Hasan also was an AmeriCorps Program Manager at Interfaith Ministries from 2005 to 2006 and was a Team Leader from 2003 to 2005. Prior to her time with AmeriCorps, Ms. Hasan was an Event and Project Coordinator for the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution from 2000 to 2003. Ms. Hasan received a B.A. from Bethel College-North Newton, Kansas and an M.A. from Wichita State University.

Lanae Erickson Hatalsky

Lanae Erickson Hatalsky is Vice President for Social Policy and Politics at Third Way, a position she has held since September 2015. Ms. Erickson Hatalsky has served in a number of roles at Third Way since 2008, including Policy Counsel, Senior Policy Counsel, Deputy Director, and Director. Before her work at Third Way, Ms. Erickson Hatalsky served as Legislative Counsel at Alliance for Justice from 2006 to 2008. She worked at the Legal Rights Center in 2005 and the Center for Victims of Torture in 2004. Ms. Erickson Hatalsky received a B.A. from Mount Holyoke College and a J.D. from the University of Minnesota.

Commissioner David Jeffrey

Commissioner David Jeffrey is National Commander at The Salvation Army USA National Headquarters, a position he has held since 2013. Commissioner Jeffrey has served in a variety of roles at The Salvation Army since 1972. He served from 2011 to 2013 as the Territorial Commander for The Salvation Army USA Southern Territory and from 2007 to 2011, Commissioner Jeffrey served as National Chief Secretary at The Salvation Army USA National Headquarters. From 2001 to 2006, he served as the Program Secretary Salvation Army Southern territory, and then worked as a Divisional Commander for Texas, Kentucky and Tennessee from 1997 to 2001. Commissioner Jeffrey served as Divisional Secretary from 1985 to 1988 and Corps Officer from 1972 to 1977. Commissioner Jeffrey received his A.A. from Hagerstown Junior College and his B.A. from Liberty University.

Naseem Kourosh

Naseem Kourosh is the Human Rights Officer at the U.S. Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs, a position she has held since 2011. In this role, Ms. Kourosh engages with colleagues and partners in discourse and advocacy around a range of human rights issues. Before joining the U.S. Bahá'í Office of Public Affairs, she practiced commercial litigation at law firms in New York City, clerked at the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey, and worked with several human rights organizations. Ms. Kourosh received a B.A. from the University of Texas at Austin and a J.D. from the New York University School of Law.

Dr. Jo Anne Lyon

Dr. Jo Anne Lyon is currently General Superintendent Emerita and Ambassador of the Wesleyan Church. She served as the General Superintendent from 2008 to 2016. In 1996, Dr. Lyon founded World Hope International and served as its CEO until 2008. She served as Adjunct Professor of Church and Society at both Indiana Wesleyan University and Asbury Theological Seminary from 1985 to 1997. She serves on the Board of Directors as representative of The Wesleyan Church of the National Association of Evangelicals Executive Committee, Christian Community Development Association, National Religious Partnership for the Environment, Asbury Theological Seminary Board, Council on Faith of the World Economic Forum, and as an ex-officio member for all Wesleyan Institutions of Higher Education. Dr. Lyon received a B.S. from the University of Cincinnati and an M.A. from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and is the recipient of five honorary degrees.

Pastor Michael McBride

Pastor Michael McBride is the Director of the Urban Strategies and LIVE FREE Campaigns at People Improving Communities through Organizing, a position he has held since 2012. Pastor McBride has also served as the Pastor of The Way Christian Center since 2005. From 2009 to 2011, he served as the Executive Director of Berkeley Organizing Congregations for Action. Pastor McBride served as the Co-Director of Intervarsity's Black Campus Ministries at the University of California at Berkeley from 2005 to 2009. From 2000 to 2002, he served as the Vice President of the San Jose/Silicon Valley NAACP and from 1999 to 2002, he was the Co-Chair of the Racial Justice Coalition of California. Pastor McBride served as the Youth and Young Adult Pastor of the Bible Way Christian Center from 1996 to 2002. Pastor McBride received a B.A. from Bethany College and an M.Div from Duke University.

Nipun Mehta

Nipun Mehta is the founder of ServiceSpace, a non-profit organization established in 1999. From 1998 to 2001, he was a software engineer at Sun Microsystems. Mr. Mehta is a member of the Advisory Circle of the Seva Foundation, the International Advisory Council of the Dalai Lama Foundation, and the Advisory Board of the Greater Good Science Center. He has received numerous awards for his community work, including the Jefferson Award for Public Service, the President's Volunteer Service Award and Wavy Gravy's Humanitarian Award. Mr. Mehta is a graduate from the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Rami Nashashibi

Director of the Inner-City Muslim Action Network, which he co-founded in 1997. He has also been a Visiting Assistant Professor at the Chicago Theological Seminary since 2013. Dr. Nashashibi serves on the Advisory Board of the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, the Executive Council of the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations, and the Planning Committee for the Martin Luther King, Jr. Living Memorial project. He was named a White House Champion of Change in 2011. Dr. Nashashibi received a B.A. from DePaul University and an M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago.

Kevin Ryan

Kevin Ryan is CEO and President of Covenant House International, positions he has held since 2009. From 2008 to 2009, he served as the Chief Operating Officer of the United Nations Special Envoy for Malaria. From 2006 to 2008, Mr. Ryan was appointed by Governor Jon Corzine to serve as the first Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families. He served as the Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Human Services in 2006. From 2003 to 2006,

Mr. Ryan served as the first State Child Advocate in the Office of the Child Advocate in New Jersey. Prior to his government service, he served as Director of the Youth Advocacy Center at Covenant House New Jersey. From 1992 to 1997, Mr. Ryan worked as a Skadden Fellow and Staff Attorney at Covenant House New York. He is the recipient of a Wasserstein Fellowship from Harvard Law School and has taught law at Fordham Law School, Seton Hall Law School, and Rutgers School of Law. Mr. Ryan received a B.A. from the Catholic University of America, a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center, and an LL.M. from the New York University School of Law.

Reverend Dr. Gabriel A. Salguero

Reverend Dr. Gabriel Salguero is a pastor of the multicultural Calvary City Church, a 4,000 member Assemblies of God church in Orlando, Florida. Reverend Dr. Gabriel Salguero served as the Senior Pastor of the multicultural Lamb's Church in New York City for 10 years. Rev. Dr. Salguero founded Nuestro Futuro in 2012. He serves as the President of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition, a position he has held since 2011. From 2010 to 2011, he served as an ethics professor at Alliance Theological Seminary, an affiliate of Nyack College. Rev. Dr. Salguero served as Director of the Princeton Theological Seminary's Hispanic/Latino Leadership Program from 2007 to 2010. Rev. Dr. Salguero received a B.A. from Rutgers University, an M.Div from New Brunswick Theological Seminary, and a D.D. from Eastern Nazarene College.

Barbara Satin

Barbara Satin is the Assistant Faith Work Director for the National LGBTQ Task Force. She is an active member of the United Church of Christ and served on the denomination's Executive Council as its first openly transgender member. Ms. Satin recently worked on the development of Spirit on Lake, a LGBTQ senior housing project in Minneapolis. She served on the Board of Directors for OutFront Minnesota from 2001 to 2008 and has served as Chair of GLBT Generations since 1999. She has also serves on the Board of Directors of PFund Foundation, a regional LGBTQ community foundation and is a board member of Clare Housing, providing housing for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Stephen Schneck

Dr. Stephen Schneck is Director of the Institute of Policy Research and Catholic Studies at The Catholic University of America (CUA), a position he has held since 2005. He served as an Associate Professor at CUA from 1990 to 2005 and as Chair of the Department of Politics from 1996 to 2005. Dr. Schneck received a B.A. from Rockhurst University, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame.

Manjit Singh

Manjit Singh is an entrepreneur and founder/President of Agilious, a software technology consulting firm. Manjit co-founded the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) in 1996 and currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF) is a national civil rights and educational organization with the mission to protect the religious liberties of people of all religious backgrounds and to empower Sikh Americans through legal assistance and advocacy. Manjit received his MS from the State University of New York at Albany in 1992 and a Bachelor of Engineering from the University of Bombay, India in 1989. He lives in Washington DC with his wife and two teenage daughters.

Alexie Torres-Fleming

Alexie Torres-Fleming is currently the Executive Director of Access Strategies Fund, a position she has held since 2014. From 2012 through 2014, she was the Executive Director of the Micah Institute at the New York Theological Seminary, and from 2010 to 2012, she was the Executive Director of the Sister Fund, where she continues to serve as a trustee. Ms. Torres-Fleming founded Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice in 1994 and served as the Executive Director until 2011. In that role, she also co-founded the Bronx River Alliance and chaired it from 2001 to 2005. She has been a Harvard School of Design Loeb Fellow, a Senior Fellow at the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing, and a New Voices Fellow for Sojourners in Washington, D.C. Ms. Torres-Fleming has received various awards, including the Rockefeller Foundation's Jane Jacobs Medal for New Ideas and Activism, the Caritas Medal from the Vincentian Society, and the Servitor Pacis Award from the Permanent Observer Mission of the Vatican to the United Nations.

Deborah Weinstein

Deborah Weinstein serves as Executive Director of the Coalition on Human Needs, a position she has held since 2003. From 1994 to 2003, Ms. Weinstein served as Director of the Family Income Division of the Children's Defense Fund. She was Executive Director of the Massachusetts Human Services Coalition from 1983 to 1993. Ms. Weinstein received a B.A. from Harpur College, State University of New York at Binghamton, and an M.S.W. from San Diego State University.

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