



Community Action Partnership
Policy Platform
2019-2020

The Community Action Partnership envisions a nation that creates opportunities for all people to thrive by building strong, resilient communities, and ensuring a more equitable society for all community members.

As the national membership association for Community Action Agencies (CAA) and State Associations, we acknowledge that local CAAs are the backbone of Community Action and play a crucial role in shaping that national vision.

The Partnership establishes this Community Action public policy platform, which is derived from our strategic plan and core values, so that local Agencies and State Associations may utilize it for local and state engagement.

- | CAP POLICY PLATFORM |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Funding & Reauthorization • Creating an Economy that Works for All with Sufficient Income for Family Well-Being • Providing Equitable Access to Clean, Affordable Energy & Infrastructure • Expanding Safe & Affordable Housing • Ensuring High Quality Education & Workforce Readiness Regardless of Circumstance • Promoting Universal Health & Well-Being • Establishing Structural Equity in the Criminal Justice System • Protecting Immigrant Community Members • Encouraging Civic Engagement that Allows Every Voice to Be Heard • Strengthening Community Resilience |

- | CAP VALUES |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We believe all people should be treated with dignity and respect and recognize that structural race, gender, and other inequities remain barriers that must be addressed. • We believe that this nation has the capacity and moral obligation to ensure that no one is forced to endure the hardships of poverty. • We believe that with hope, adequate resources and opportunities, everyone can reach their fullest potential, and we are committed to achieving that vision. • We pledge ourselves to creating an environment that pursues innovation and excellence through multi-sector partnership and collaboration. |

Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Funding & Reauthorization

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) is the only federal funding source with the objective of decreasing poverty in America regardless of cause. The touchstones of local control and flexibility make protecting CSBG reauthorization and funding paramount to Community Action. CSBG ensures that low-income individuals and others in the community have a voice in the planning and oversight of local programs, that initiatives respond to locally identified needs, and that resources are coordinated and used effectively. Each CAA uses CSBG to tailor its response to their community's particular poverty challenges.

We support the reauthorization of the CSBG Act and increased CSBG funding in the federal budget as supported by the National Community Action Foundation (NCAF). Reauthorizing CSBG will create a more secure legislative foundation for the block grant and preserve its unique characteristics, including low-income participation, flexible funds, and local control. Increased funding for the program will expand the ability of CAAs to be the first line of defense against poverty in America by providing assistance and services to their respective communities.

Creating an Economy that Works for All with Sufficient Income for Family Well-Being

Our economy must work for all members of our communities, regardless of wealth or historical marginalization. Despite positive economic indicators, such as low unemployment numbers and high stock prices, our current economy is not working for most individuals and families. Wage growth was flat during most of the recovery from the 2008 financial crisis, and studies have shown that 40 percent of adults and families could not cover an unexpected \$400 expense. Only economic policies that benefit everyone can allow each community member to realize their full potential.

- Establishing a living wage at the federal and state level will ensure that all individuals and families have meaningful access to 21st century necessities, including housing, nutrition, clean water, health care, transportation, and the internet.
- Funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant has decreased more than 35% since it was created. The transition to the block grant has resulted in fewer vulnerable families and individuals being able to access life-saving cash assistance. We believe that TANF should be restructured to remove arbitrary state spending caps and allow for flexibility in order to address fluctuations in population and poverty. With or without restructuring, we support increased funding for TANF, specifically increases in available cash assistance, which will lead to expanded opportunities for individuals and families to transition out of poverty.
- We oppose attacks on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including implementing work requirements, eliminating broad-based categorical eligibility, and decreasing

utility allowances in many states. These proposals will result in millions of individuals and families being denied safe, high-quality nutrition, forcing them further into poverty.

- Protecting Social Security benefits is crucial to establishing an equitable economy where no one is left behind. Over the past 20 years, Social Security benefits have lost 33 percent of their buying power due to inflation. Additionally, attempts to privatize or block grant social security could have catastrophic economic consequences for retirees, disabled individuals, and families of deceased workers in our communities. We believe that Social Security benefits must keep pace with inflation and not be privatized so that its recipients are not forced to live in poverty.
- Recent studies show that most Americans are not adequately prepared for retirement. Less than half of working age adults own retirement account assets. Three-quarters of those with retirement savings do not have enough savings to reach even conservative retirement savings targets. Both of these statistics skew in favor of wealthy individuals and families. We support policies that will strengthen Social Security, assist low-income individuals and families build assets, and increase access to low-cost, high quality retirement plans.
- The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) has been proven to be one of the most effective tools for preventing and reducing poverty. Increasing eligibility caps for the credit would allow many more individuals and families to access it, preventing them from sliding into poverty and expanding the path toward achieving their fullest potential. Supporting state level match rates for the credit is an effective stepping stone toward federal adjustments. Increased funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites would ensure that workers eligible for the credit are aware of and have access to it.
- Stringent benefit eligibility thresholds have created a “cliff effect,” meaning that a slight increase in assets leads to denial of vital benefits. In fact, multiple studies have documented instances where individuals and families have foregone available increases in income in order to avoid losing benefits such as health care and nutritional assistance for children. States have proven effective incubators for possible solutions, including expanded transition services and supplemental buy-in programs to create an “eligibility slope.” A federal solution could lead to more states adopting these policies and prevent families from deciding between benefits and economic opportunity.
- Federal poverty measurements have been set at artificially depressed rates. In 2019, a family of three is below the poverty line if their annual household income is below \$21,330. The Supplemental Poverty Rate (SPR) threshold, which factors in various expenses, household make-up, and geographic location, is only marginally higher. These measurements fall short of accurately representing the amount of people in our communities who cannot survive and provide for their families. Studies have demonstrated that an income high enough to survive is more than twice the Official Poverty Measure (OPM) in some geographic areas. In order to truly address poverty in America, we need an accurate representation of who is struggling. We support altering poverty measurements to account for skyrocketing housing, health care, and child care costs.
- Steady employment leads to more security and a sense of purpose, but vulnerable populations face multiple barriers to retaining steady employment. Discrimination, predatory scheduling,

and poor working conditions can prevent individuals with low-incomes from keeping their jobs. We believe in increased protections for workers, including scheduling equity and flexibility, accommodations and transitions for individuals with disabilities, safer work environments, and more stringent enforcement of existing anti-discrimination laws that protect people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals. Removing employment barriers for individuals who want to work will reduce poverty and strengthen our communities.

- Quality child care is expensive and a barrier to many individuals entering the workforce. In some states, it has the same annual cost as tuition at a public university. Universal child care with quality of care requirements would allow more individuals to accept employment and increase wages for child care workers.
- Our country is unprepared to support America's increasing senior citizen population, 7.1 million of whom live in poverty. Entitlements provide less support than they have in the past. Medicare and Medicaid products and services are under attack and Social Security benefits have not increased with inflation. Fewer seniors are adequately prepared for retirement, due, in part, to the decrease in employer-funded pensions. We need to ensure the well-being of seniors by allowing them to live independently in their homes. This includes supporting policies that sufficiently fund homecare and supportive services, transportation services, and meal delivery programs.

Providing Equitable Access to Clean, Affordable Energy & Infrastructure

As the climate crisis worsens, equitable access to affordable energy sources, weatherization programs, and reliable communication networks is paramount to a community's ability to protect its most vulnerable members. Investments in community shared renewable energy sources will reduce both carbon emissions and utility bills. Increases in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters means that community access to affordable weatherization services has never been more vital. Access to cellular networks and high-speed internet has become indispensable to daily tasks and are crucial in an emergency.

- The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides funding for low-income households to update homes and apartment buildings to make them more energy efficient. The program supports 8,500 jobs and services approximately 35,000 homes annually, with each household saving approximately \$283 on annual energy costs. We support the reauthorization of this program to ensure that more residences are healthy, safe, and energy efficient.
- The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low income households pay for heating and cooling costs and funds crisis assistance and weatherization programs. We oppose eliminating this lifeline, which provides assistance to more than 6 million households annually. We support maintaining funding for this program in order to protect vulnerable members of communities from progressively dangerous temperature levels and natural disasters caused by climate change.
- We support Percentage of Income Payment Plans (PIPP) that cap individuals' energy bills at a percentage of their household income. PIPPs foster self-sufficiency by helping people pay their

own bills on time. Many offer other benefits such as arrearage reduction programs to help customers pay down past-due utility bills, client education services, and sliding scale eligibility criteria to mitigate cliff effects.

- We support continued research, funding, and implementation of renewable energy sources and systems integration. Reliance on fossil fuels is contributing to the climate crisis and is not a sustainable source of energy. Increased funding for and incentives to expand renewable sources such as wind, geothermal, and solar power will reduce carbon emissions and lower energy costs for all community members. We support community shared solar programs that allow vulnerable community members to band together to decrease their energy costs and carbon footprint.
- We believe that the ability to access clean drinking water and wastewater services is a human right. Millions of Americans still struggle to access clean drinking water, many of whom are low-income or people of color. Each individual and community faces different challenges to obtaining this access, including increasing water bills, lack of running water, and crumbling water infrastructure. In rural communities, especially, it can be difficult to access affordable and safe wastewater services. We support initiatives that establish or strengthen customer assistance programs, increase funding for water infrastructure updates, and allow partnerships between community, government, and private entities to achieve these goals.
- Advanced telecommunications capability has become a necessity of everyday life for many Americans. High-speed Internet access is essential for education, healthcare, and economic opportunity. Despite recent advancements, more than 24 million Americans are still without adequate broadband services. Within that group, dramatic inequalities persist between urban and rural areas. We support increasing the minimum “broadband” speed and increased subsidies for network expansion to rural areas and underserved communities.
- Effective and robust infrastructure systems provide a backbone of often unseen services in both rural and urban communities. Access to those systems, including reliable communication, energy distribution, water, and transportation, is essential to realizing your fullest potential in the modern era. When infrastructure systems are allowed to atrophy, low-income households are hit hardest. Decaying roads and bridges affect commutes to work and school. Crumbling water infrastructure erodes public health, which affects all community members. We believe that increased funding for maintenance of these systems is crucial to community success and resiliency.
- Access to an efficient, affordable, and safe public transportation system is a key factor in the transition out of poverty. In many communities, access to a car is paramount for retaining employment, food security, and other essential goods and services. Creation and expansion of reliable and affordable public transit systems will connect more families to employers, educational opportunities, and health care services.

Expanding Safe & Affordable Housing

Housing is a human right for all members of a community. Preventing and eradicating homelessness plays a crucial role in supporting vulnerable populations while they transition out of poverty. We support expanding current housing assistance programs, accelerating affordable housing production, ending all types of housing discrimination, updating constrictive state and local regulations, and strengthening protections for all consumers against predatory financial institutions.

- Current housing program funding has proven insufficient to adequately address the current housing crisis. Production of affordable housing units is one solution, but it takes years to build, and even longer to have a mitigating effect on market prices in a community. We believe that current housing initiatives being run through the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA) address the problem with more urgency and should be expanded. We believe in increased funding for these programs, including project-based rental assistance, housing choice vouchers, the HOME block grant, supportive housing for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with AIDS, the Farm Labor Housing program, and rural rental assistance.
- The negative effects of homelessness on children are well-documented and about 2.5 million children are homeless each year. However, the current HUD definition of homelessness only includes individuals whose nighttime residence is a shelter or a space not meant for human habitation. This definition excludes children who are temporarily staying in a household due to loss of housing or economic hardship. Other federal departments, including the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Education (ED) use expanded homelessness definitions that include these children. We believe expanding the definition of homelessness at HUD by aligning these definitions will result in a more accurate picture of who is homeless in America and increased use of federal funds to address child homelessness.
- Local zoning rules and construction restrictions prevent the production of new affordable and multi-use housing units and are barriers to efficient use of housing resources. We support proposals that would update local regulations to allow greater housing density including auxiliary units and mandate that a certain percentage of new housing construction be affordable. We also support regulatory reforms that make housing construction cheaper, including allowing production of smaller homes and repurposing existing structures such as warehouses into affordable housing units.
- Millions of eviction filings are made every year and represent both a symptom and cause of poverty in America. For many families, unforeseen factors like a high medical bill or change in economic circumstances can lead to arrearages in rental payments. We believe there must be more support systems that keep families in their homes through challenging economic circumstances. First, we need more data collection on how evictions occur and the populations most affected. Second, we need affordable, efficient adjudication mechanisms to resolve disputes cheaply and quickly. Third, the direst circumstances require emergency assistance funds that will allow families to stay in their homes while they get back on their feet.
- The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) provides tax credits for developers and investors in order to incentivize production of affordable housing for low-income families and individuals.

Parts of the credit were increased by 12.5% in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. However, the expansion sunsets after 4 years and allows income averaging for certain properties, limiting the benefit to low-income tenants. We support continuing the credit increase and eliminating the income averaging provision, which will strengthen communities in order to spur additional production of affordable housing units.

- We strongly support measures that ensure equity in access to quality housing. Certain demographic groups have been historically excluded from this access, including racial and ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities, families, and previously incarcerated individuals. HUD receives thousands of complaints of discriminatory housing practices each year. We support expanding current housing discrimination prohibitions to include sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income, and marital status. We also oppose any changes in housing discrimination policy that will make it easier for housing providers to discriminate against potential consumers. These include changes to Fair Housing Act (FHA) enforcement that shift the burden of proof from the housing provider to the potential consumer and relaxing mortgage disclosure requirements that hold financial institutions accountable for their loan origination decisions.
- The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is one of the largest, longest-running federal grants created to principally benefit low or moderate income populations. Grant funds are used for eligible activities such as public facility construction, provision of public services, job creation, energy conservation, and historic preservation. We continue to support CDBG and believe additional funding would have even greater positive effects on low-income families in our communities.
- The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) was passed to incentivize banks and other financial institutions to lend to all borrowers who are members of the institution's community, including low-income communities and communities of color. We support expanding the scope of the law to include more financial institutions, creating incentives for community investments apart from credit needs, and strengthening community protection through more stringent penalties for violations.

Ensuring High Quality Education & Workforce Readiness Regardless of Circumstance

Equal access to all levels of education and training programs is crucial for poverty reduction, enhanced economic mobility, and community engagement. Providing educational options at every stage, from universal pre-kindergarten to public college, apprenticeships, and job training, allows all community members to learn new skills, pursue goals, and realize their fullest potential.

- Early childhood education is one of the most effective tools to ensure that all members of a community are able to succeed. We believe that universal access to early education programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, put children and their parents on the path to sustained achievement. These programs prepare our future workforce and are integral to the economic development of our communities. We also believe that these programs are most

effective when implemented through or paired with a Two Generation or whole family approach.

- Many services are directed at benefitting either adult or children family members. This disconnected approach can lead to discrete benefits failing to work in concert to benefit whole families. We believe that, where possible, these services should be intentionally integrated so that parents and children mutually benefit from each other's advances. Families and communities grow stronger by building economic assets, social capital, and educational achievements together.
- We believe access to quality afterschool programs provides widespread benefits for both students and parents. It allows students to explore interests they may not be exposed to in the classroom and receive academic assistance where appropriate. Such programs also benefit parents by giving them the opportunity to explore employment options that would be precluded by the average school day schedule.
- All high school students deserve the chance to further their education and pursue their goals. We believe that students from all backgrounds and experiences should be able to attend public vocational and technical schools as well as public colleges and universities without incurring debt.
- The student debt crisis is weakening our country and our communities. Today, over 44 million borrowers owe over \$1.5 trillion in education debt. Student loan debt is now the second highest consumer debt category, second only to mortgages. This country-wide debt is impeding economic growth and preventing individuals from reaching their full potential. We believe mitigating exponential debt increases should be a priority for policymakers. We support expanding and providing meaningful access to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, strengthening public education systems through increased funding, creating new higher education opportunities for low-income households, and expanding enforcement of predatory lending rules.
- Equal access to job training programs is essential for matching unemployed individuals with available positions in their communities. Such programs help close skills gaps that appear in a shifting economy and provide employment opportunities that strengthen communities. We believe flexibility in funding for job training programs will help communities tailor programs to meet the unique needs of that community.
- Every individual deserves access to the services and tools necessary to join the workforce. Workforce Readiness programs that provide training for unemployed and underemployed individuals are crucial to obtaining gainful and secure employment. We support expanding the use of One-Stop Centers where individuals can receive job training, interview preparation guidance, and access to adult education and literacy classes. These transitional service centers will engage communities and lead to more self-sufficient individuals and families.
- Low-income individuals and families in our communities deal with financial stress on a daily basis. Services that help transition low-income individuals out of poverty can be successful, but only partially so if service recipients have limited capacity to manage financial resources

effectively. We support training programs that include financial management skills to help individuals and families transition successfully out of poverty in a way that prevents them from experiencing poverty in the future.

Promoting Universal Health and Well-Being

Meaningful access to quality affordable health care is a human right. It has been well-documented that America has higher health care costs than any other developed nation, which makes it extremely difficult for individuals and families to receive the care they need. We believe in universal coverage for all community members, which includes affordable prescription drugs, reductions in geographic and categorical barriers to access, and provision of mental health services. All members of our communities deserve a health care system that allows them to live healthy lives while pursuing their goals.

- Ensuring that health coverage is universal across and within all communities is fundamental to the fight against poverty. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) got us closer than ever before to achieving universal coverage, but we're not there yet. We believe that universal coverage should be the ultimate goal of any proposed change in health policy, systematic or otherwise.
- Expanding Medicaid in every state to cover individuals and families up to 138 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) will fill gaps in coverage for vulnerable populations who do not qualify for base Medicaid, but cannot afford Marketplace plans, with or without subsidies. After the Supreme Court ruled that states had the option to reject an expansion of their Medicaid programs, many states adopted the expansion. But there are currently 14 states that have not expanded their Medicaid eligibility. We believe that these states should immediately adopt and implement the expansion to protect the health and well-being of their vulnerable populations that have been left behind by the Supreme Court's interpretation of the ACA.
- Promoting the benefits of mental health counseling and substance use services is a key aspect of universal health care access. We believe in maintaining funding for federal initiatives that expand access to these services, including incentives for state and local services, the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, and public education on mental health issues and services. Providers should play a more active role in mental health assessments and referrals. Rural areas are disproportionately denied access to quality behavioral health. With equitable access to communication networks, rural and underserved communities and populations could benefit from telemedicine advances that increase access to these services.
- Providing equitable, safe access to affordable prescription drugs is essential for the health and safety of all community members. The United States has the highest drug prices in the world, partially because the federal government does not negotiate drug prices. But unlike other goods, not having access to a medication can be a matter of survival. A patient's access to affordable, life-saving medication should not depend on their location or income.
- Safeguarding funding for community health centers (CHC) is necessary for preserving access to quality care for vulnerable populations and communities. In many areas, these health centers provide the only option for affordable health care. In 2016, CHCs provided care to approximately

26.5 million patients and families. Without them, patients may have to drive hundreds of miles, making health emergencies infinitely more dangerous than they would be with closer facilities.

- A person's health does not exist in a vacuum. Multiple environmental factors contribute to the health and well-being of individuals and families. Health professionals and organizations are beginning to identify and address social determinants as powerful predictors of a person's health. We support cross-industry, interdisciplinary efforts to address these social determinants, including economic stability, neighborhood characteristics, and education, as a form of preventative health. Access to affordable equitable health care is becoming more and more elusive, but addressing social determinants of health can increase the well-being of people with lower incomes and circumvent costly health issues in the future.
- Protecting access to quality care for seniors in our communities is crucial to attaining universal coverage. Seniors are one of our most vulnerable populations with some of the most urgent and continuous health care needs. We believe protecting Social Security and Medicare and supplemental coverage sources is necessary for ensuring our seniors have access to quality health care.
- The opioid crisis continues to ravage communities across the country. From 2000 to 2014 overdose deaths from opioid and heroin use increased by 200 percent. The effects on our Network are vast. CAAs and state associations dispense information on health and substance use services, provide housing, and connect with opioid users through case management. We support multiple policies that mitigate the effects of opioids on our communities including reducing over-prescription of opioids through provider education and limiting initial prescription periods, and reducing barriers to treatment by allowing more providers to prescribe medication-assisted therapy.

Establishing Structural Equity in the Criminal Justice System

The current contours of our criminal justice system are not equitable. They unfairly disadvantage low-income individuals and families as well as communities of color. Recent adjustments to mandatory minimums and some reentry programs will be beneficial, but more work is needed. The system as a whole must be viewed through a lens of addressing previous policy injustices with an eye towards policies that will make the system more equitable. We believe these policies should include expanded pretrial diversion programs, eliminating cash bail, clearly defined prisoners' rights, and de-escalation and implicit bias training for law enforcement.

- Expanding pretrial justice programs gives alleged perpetrators the option to be diverted from the traditional criminal justice system. Pretrial diversion programs can place alleged perpetrators in a restorative justice setting where they collaborate with other community members to prescribe an appropriate punishment. Federal prosecutorial guidelines on diversion exist, but we believe they should be codified and regularly utilized.
- Eliminating the current cash bail system, which unfairly targets low-income and minority populations by conditioning pretrial release on an alleged perpetrator's ability to pay, will make the criminal justice system more equitable. Due to increases in both bail amounts and the use of

financial conditions for pretrial release, large numbers of low-income defendants remain in jail while they await trial. For 37 percent of people unable to meet bail, their annual income is actually less than the median bail payment and studies have shown that Black and Hispanic defendants are less likely to be able to post money bail than white defendants. Removing de facto pretrial detention for individuals with lower incomes will create a more equitable pretrial justice system.

- Preserving the rights of convicted individuals post-release upholds the tenet of the justice system that once you have “paid your debt to society” there is no further penalty. We support adequate funding for reentry programs (both pre- and post-release) and “ban the box” proposals that do not require conviction disclosure on employment and housing applications. Additionally, we believe in expungement for nonviolent criminal records and restoring the right to vote to released individuals. The voices of formerly incarcerated individuals are no less valid than other members of the community. They offer unique insight into our criminal justice system and should be part of our political discourse.
- Juvenile justice systems have widespread effects on the foundation of our communities. Studies have shown that just moving through a criminal justice system can increase the chances that an individual will reoffend, and juveniles are no different. Even without a re-offense, juvenile records severely restrict an individual’s options regarding education, employment, financial, and housing opportunities. We support proposals that increase the age of majority so that fewer minors are tried as adults and expunging certain juvenile records to expand opportunities for youthful offenders later in life.
- Abolishing private prisons would have the dual effects of reversing mass incarceration and creating revenue savings that can be diverted to investments that strengthen communities. Private prison corporations run a percentage of state prisons, federal prisons, and immigration detention facilities. Undoing the privatization of the prison industry would remove the perverse incentive to incarcerate more and more individuals. Revenue savings could be used for local projects like parks or community centers that make communities more resilient.
- Community policing and requiring law enforcement agencies to incorporate de-escalation and implicit-bias training into their basic and ongoing training curricula will make communities stronger and safer. When law enforcement is engaged in identifying and addressing biases, more members of the community will feel more secure turning to law enforcement to report wrongdoing, instead of seeing them as potential adversaries.

Protecting Immigrant Community Members

Our communities have always been strengthened and become more prosperous by the addition of diverse voices and experiences from all over the globe. Attacks against immigrants and particularly immigrants of color are weakening our communities by dividing us. The continued separation of children from their families and new rule denying green cards to millions of immigrants trying to succeed are unacceptable. All immigrants are part of our communities. When we give them the resources and support they need to succeed, our communities succeed as well.

- Opposing the removal of protections for innocent children at the border is crucial. Family separation is an abdication of American values and has long-lasting negative effects on families, including adverse childhood trauma. The Flores consent decree prohibits holding minors in detention facilities for more than 20 days. We oppose the repeal of that requirement, which would allow the government to hold small children for months or even years while they await their immigration or asylum hearings. We believe that individuals and families crossing our border must be treated with dignity and respect throughout the entire immigration process.
- We believe in educating the community action network and other service providers about the new public charge rule, which denies Permanent Legal Status (PLS) and citizenship to many immigrants that have benefited from social programs. We believe this training is important not just for individuals and families affected by the new rule, but also to protect those who are outside the rule's scope, but who forego benefits out of fear. The rule has already had a chilling effect on individuals and families accessing benefits to which they are entitled. Immigrants coming to the United States with little or no assets is so common it has almost become a platitude. Creating an arbitrary wealth criteria for entry goes against American values and denies our communities the resilience that comes from including members of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- We believe every community member deserves the opportunity to work hard and live up to their fullest potential, especially individuals who have been marginalized because of immutable characteristics. Individuals who immigrated to America as minors and became undocumented deserve these opportunities no less than community members who were born American citizens. The legal status and potential deferred action of these individuals has been in doubt for almost a decade. We support proposals that would codify deferred action for childhood arrivals and allow them to live up to their fullest potential.

Encouraging Civic Engagement that Allows Every Voice to Be Heard

Liberal democracy depends on civic engagement and extending equal opportunity for engagement to every member of the community. Exercising voting rights is the most familiar and invoked engagement activity. However, many have argued that the level of involvement in local organizations where issues are discussed and votes taken is a more accurate measure of a democracy's potency.

- Protecting the right to vote for all Americans and cultivating voting as a popular form of engagement is inseparable from the success of our democracy. On the back end, we believe in vigilantly protecting the right to vote, especially for marginalized or vulnerable populations, such as former inmates and racial and ethnic minorities. This includes a new coverage formula to trigger the preclearance process for new voting restrictions, as well as voicing opposition to redistricting maps that disparately impact communities of color.
- Educating all community members about the importance of the decennial census and the effect the results will have on voting blocks, representation in Congress, and federal funding levels for vital programs and services is crucial. We believe in a robust implementation of the Constitution's instruction to count the "whole number of persons," with a particular emphasis

on consistently undercounted populations such as children, communities of color, and low-income individuals and families.

- Instilling democratic values in our communities through engagement in local organizations is the best way to practice democracy. We believe that involvement in community organizations and bodies, especially at a young age, is the foundation of our democracy's institutional sustainability. All community members should be encouraged to participate in these organizations and bodies in order to protect against the erosion of our democratic values.

Strengthening Community Resilience

A community's ability to respond to challenges and adapt to changing circumstances while keeping its values intact is paramount. Myriad global crises, such as the climate crisis, economic crises, and equity issues, affect all of our communities. The policies in this platform represent some of the possible solutions to these crises, but the way communities respond to and mitigate these crises is equally important.

We support systemic approaches to increasing well-being for all community members and fostering preparedness for both predictable and unforeseen crises. All members of a community must be responsible for and exercise their power to move their communities toward greater resilience. This means equitable processes that engage all community members in finding solutions to current and future crises.