

Build Equitable Communities to Increase Opportunity for All.

Poverty has become more concentrated and diverse.

- Decades of research show how neighborhoods matter when it comes to the health, well-being, and economic security of residents, as well as the strength of local and regional economies. Yet while our metro economies have grown stronger since the recession, we also saw a rise in the number of poor individuals in highly concentrated neighborhoods of extreme poverty.
- Poverty is more concentrated and still too high, but it has spread from the urban centers of our country across our suburbs and rural areas across the Sunbelt, the Midwest, and the South.
- While minority residents continue to make up the largest share of the population living in poverty, more residents of extreme-poverty neighborhoods are likely to be white, native-born, high school or college graduates, and homeowners.

Across the country, municipal leaders are adjusting to address the challenges of today and the growth we expect. We need a stronger partnership with the federal government to enact policies that will create balanced and sustainable economic growth at the regional level, and create more connections between growing clusters of low-income neighborhoods and regional economic opportunity in cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

Cities and metropolitan regions are the epicenters of America's diversity and the centers of our country's economy. Yet many communities in America are still working to rebuild and refashion their economies to put them on a path toward growth.

And high inequality, stalled mobility, and persistent racial inequities in health, income, wealth, and opportunity ultimately place long-term growth and prosperity at risk.

For our nation and cities to thrive, we must build equitable communities. Just and fair inclusion must be incorporated into the fabric of our communities and across all policy areas, including economic development, education, criminal justice, civic participation, housing, and health care. Through equitable growth strategies that ensure all residents and neighborhoods become more connected to their regional economies, we can tackle poverty, lift up our most distressed neighborhoods and residents, and increase economic security and mobility for all.

Housing: To build safe, healthy, and equitable communities, we must start by making it easier for families to live with the security and dignity of a home in a safe neighborhood. The public policy decisions we make at every level of government have a profound impact on the fabric of our neighborhoods. If we are going to address poverty in America, we need to recognize the impact of housing policy on families, local communities, and the nation.

Education: Our economic growth, safety, and overall prosperity also rely on our ability to provide quality education from early childhood to postsecondary schools. We must recognize that the success of a neighborhood is directly tied to the state of its schools. Every child in America deserves the opportunities that come with a quality education in a safe and modern school.



Health: Quality health care in this country should be viewed by all as a human right, not as a privilege for those who can afford access to it. We must not go back to the days in which millions of Americans with no access to health care resorted to using emergency rooms as their primary health care option. Health care in Washington has become too partisan and too political. We need to reorient the debate and stay true to the promise of quality coverage at the lowest cost possible for all Americans.

We must also acknowledge that the recovery of our economy has not reached every community, and many distressed neighborhoods in cities, suburbs, and rural areas are still experiencing the negative effects of poverty and lack of investment in these communities. According to research from the Brookings Institution, “The rapid growth of the nation’s poor population during the 2000s also coincided with significant shifts in the geography of American poverty. Poverty spread beyond its historic urban and rural locales, rising rapidly in smaller metropolitan areas and making the nation’s suburbs home to the largest and fastest-growing poor population in the country.”⁵

Since 1975, the federal government has funded communities through CDBG, and today nearly 1,200 grantees receive direct allocations. CDBG is not just a government spending program; for every \$1.00 of CDBG investment, \$3.65 in private and public dollars are leveraged. Bringing together private sector and public sector investment is the best way to revitalize our communities, and CDBG investments have provided an important tool for mayors across the country.

Unfortunately, while the wealth disparity in our communities has grown, the CDBG program has been cut by nearly \$1 billion since fiscal year 2010, from \$3.9 billion to \$3.0 billion in fiscal year 2016, despite the fact that every year, in communities across the country, the program has assisted businesses, created jobs in low- and moderate-income areas, improved

housing stock, and funded important public improvements in our most impoverished neighborhoods.

Finally, to build safe, healthy, and equitable communities, mayors rely on allocation of federal resources to state and local communities based on the most current and accurate data to ensure that federal funds reach their intended populations. Hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funds are allocated each year to address federal priorities in areas such as housing and community development, transportation, health care, law enforcement, education, and workforce investment. Without current and accurate data, it is impossible to ensure that federal funds will reach the intended populations.

The U.S. Census Bureau is the leading source of quality data about the nation’s people and economy. The Census Bureau conducts a host of surveys to collect and distribute data to policy makers at all levels of government. Full funding of Census Bureau efforts to collect and distribute current and accurate data must be supported, including the American Community Survey, Economic Census, Census of Governments, and other relevant surveys.

Increase equity within our communities and ensure civil and human rights for all Americans.

For decades, America’s mayors have taken a strong position in support of civil rights and in opposition to racism and discrimination of all kinds. In the 54 years since the murder of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi, the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, which killed four young girls, and the March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., much progress has been made in addressing past grievances and in ensuring the civil and human rights of all Americans.

⁵ “U.S. concentrated poverty in the wake of the Great Recession,” Brookings, March 2016

Federal civil and voting rights laws have been passed, and to a great extent, implemented. But much remains to be done.

Hate speech is increasing in our nation, and we are now seeing efforts in our states and at the highest levels of our government to weaken existing civil rights policies and reduce their enforcement. We have seen an increase in hate violence, xenophobic rhetoric, and discriminatory actions that target Muslims, Jews, and other minorities. Anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. surged by more than one-third in 2016 and have jumped 86% in the first quarter of 2017, according to new data from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). Anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2015 increased by 67% over the previous year, according to the FBI.

Mayors and their cities must continue to be a beacon for inclusion, tolerance, and respect for all. Mayors will continue their efforts to eliminate a broad range of discrimination in housing, employment, education, health care, city services, contracting, procurement, and other vital areas. And mayors will continue to seek to create stronger cultures of kindness and compassion in our communities, recognizing that this will help to build up the social infrastructure and make our cities more resilient, happier, and healthier.

Across the country, many mayors have spoken out against discrimination and injustice when it has occurred and have undertaken efforts to build tolerance and understanding within their communities. In recent years, cities have undertaken efforts to integrate immigrants into their communities and have adopted a variety of policies to include fully and treat equitably their LGBT residents.

Again, much progress has been made, but much remains to be done to continue to oppose racism and discrimination in every community in America:



- Continue collective efforts to speak out against racism and other forms of discrimination and propose solutions, and join with national civil rights organizations in this effort.
- Examine and improve existing municipal policies and procedures that contribute to a lack of equity in our communities and work to create policies that embed the principles of equity throughout municipal government.
- Ensure that city policies and procedures promote inclusion and that employees are provided the training needed to implement those policies.
- Advocate for inclusion and nondiscrimination in all federal laws, policies, and programs. Work toward sentencing and prison reform to reduce disparities between blacks and Hispanics and whites in sentences and incarceration rates and to improve the ability of people released from prison to reenter their communities.
- Continue advocacy for an expanded national effort to reduce poverty and create employment opportunities by increasing job creation, job training, child care availability, transportation availability, affordable housing, and other needed assistance.
- Work with school systems to promote education about differences, the importance of tolerance, and behavior that respects differences among people.
- Facilitate the integration of immigrants and other new residents into the community.



- Encourage community activities that celebrate diversity and educate city residents about the different cultures that compose a city's population.

Invest in inclusive neighborhoods, affordable housing, and community development.

Housing plays a critical role in determining life opportunities. Your house not only impacts your living space and household budget, it determines the quality of your schools, the safety of your streets, the length of your commute, and more. All communities struggle to ensure that low-income families can live in healthy homes in neighborhoods that connect them to opportunity amid rising housing costs and stagnant wages. And we must ensure that those families are not displaced from those neighborhoods once they start coming back.

Home ownership should be attainable for any family that wants to plant roots in their community. The benefits of homeownership are numerous. A December 2016 paper, "Social Benefits of Homeownership and Housing," by the National Association of Realtors concluded the following:

- Owning a home embodies the promise of individual autonomy and is the aspiration of most American households.
- Homeownership allows households to accumulate wealth and social status, and is the basis for many positive social, economic, family, and civic outcomes.
- Homeownership boosts the educational performance of children, induces higher participation in civic and volunteering activity, improves health care outcomes, lowers crime rates, and lessens welfare dependency.

Our housing policy must also provide rental housing for our citizens, especially those in tight rental markets where low- and moderate-income renters need housing they can afford. Just as important is inclusive housing policy that helps first-time home buyers and renters, upgrades and

preserves subsidized and "naturally affordable" housing, increases mixed-use areas and diversity in our neighborhoods, and strengthens our economies.

Across the country, mayors and other local leaders focus on community development and housing policy because small business development, education, public safety, and economic growth are all tied to the success of our neighborhoods. Through low-income housing tax credits, inclusionary zoning and developer incentives for mixed-use and affordable housing, mayors and local leaders are working in their communities to build thriving neighborhoods and rebuild a stronger and more diverse middle class.

Our nation's mayors are committed to building equitable communities and understand that investments in affordable housing and smart housing policy are critical components of safe, healthy, and vibrant neighborhoods. The federal government should support our efforts to build stronger neighborhoods:

- Fund CDBG at no less than \$4.1 billion. If adjusted for inflation, CDBG would be funded today at approximately \$8 billion.
- Allow cities with high percentages of blighted structures to use CDBG for economic redevelopment projects in partnership with private developers.
- Implement the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule to help communities increase housing opportunity.
- Increase funding for the HUD Homeless Assistance Programs and the HOME Investment Partnerships program, and support increased funding for the National Housing Trust Fund.
- Increase funding for the housing choice voucher program and fully fund the existing project-based rental assistance program.
- Continue federal funding programs that help

residents control utility and transportation costs that impact housing affordability, such as DOE's Weatherization Assistance Program, HHS's Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, and FTA's Rural Transportation Assistance and Urbanized Area Formula Funding programs. Broader programs such as CDBG should allow local communities to allocate money toward holistic housing affordability improvements.

- Modernize and preserve one of the nation's largest infrastructure investments – public housing – through funding increases geared toward capital improvements.
- Expand funding through the COPS program directly to cities to support greater community building, including community policing divisions, de-escalation and sensitivity training, and other resources that will help build and maintain a trusting relationship between police officers and the community they serve.
- Guarantee affordability and protection of flood insurance and fair access to home ownership by reauthorizing the National Flood Insurance Program, which is scheduled to expire in September. This essential program fills a gap in the market that would otherwise leave homeowners and small businesses vulnerable to financial ruin in the face of a natural disaster.
- Target support for emerging neighborhoods that are on the cusp of success, but still need support in certain areas of community development, affordable housing, blight mitigation, or small business development. We can do this by increasing the Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund, which is intended to bring and leverage more lending capital to businesses and individuals in these neighborhoods and promote more economic inclusion, build stronger local tax bases, and continue impact investment in areas the community has identified as a priority.

Improve our public education from pre-k through college.

America will never be great if we fail to invest properly in public education. A child without an early childhood education is 25% more likely to drop out of school, 40% more likely to become a teenage parent, and 70% more likely to be arrested for a violent crime.

Over 50 million students and 3.1 million teachers attend and work in public elementary and secondary schools in America. Under-resourced schools in poor communities deny the children who attend them a fair pathway to success.

Each dollar invested in quality early childhood education results in a \$7 return as quality preschool helps combat crime, teen pregnancy, and high school dropout rates. In today's economy, education policy and investment must embrace a cradle-to-career strategy that uses data to identify where we are falling short and directs resources to the neighborhoods and communities that are falling behind.

If we want every child in this country to have an equal opportunity, we must start with equal access to quality education, in a safe and modern school with a teacher who has the resources and technology to prepare children for their future. And this practice continues beyond high school. In today's economy, nearly every family-supporting job requires "middle skills" for which a diploma is not enough. To succeed, every American needs education beyond the diploma, whether a university or college degree, military training, a vocational certificate, or an apprenticeship. Mayors have been leading the way with local initiatives to ensure that every young person is ready for postsecondary education and training, and that tuition ceases to be a barrier.



The nation's mayors are committed to education policy and investment that build stronger neighborhoods and brighter futures for the next generation of Americans. The federal government must partner with mayors to ensure that our public education investments are working for every neighborhood in this country and that our education system creates opportunities for all by integrating workforce training and retraining with our public education investments.

- Provide universal, high-quality preschool for all children. Providing publicly funded preschool will help close the achievement gap by giving every child a head start. Dedicated tax credits, pretax flex accounts, and direct funding to local school districts in poorer counties and neighborhoods can help families who are not able to afford the high cost of quality preschool.
- Increase funding for Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act youth employment programs. The recent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) includes numerous measures to provide support for high school dropouts. WIOA now requires the youth formula program to spend at least 75% of funds on out-of-school youth, compared with 30% under its predecessor, the Workforce Investment Act. Funding for these youth employment programs must be increased, and at the bare minimum funded at authorized levels.
- Develop and pass a plan for making community and technical college tuition-free for all students nationwide.
- Increase Title I and Title II funding to provide more grants to state and local agencies to recruit, retain, and develop quality educators.
- Make sure every child has access to a complete curriculum, including science, technology, arts, and entrepreneurship, that will prepare them for careers in our modern economy.
- Include and prioritize the rebuilding of schools in cities and rural communities, within any infrastructure investments and infrastructure tax incentives by the federal government.

- Renew and expand the federal government's commitment to community service and AmeriCorps with a dedicated expansion of the investment in after-school programs and mentorship opportunities in our low- and moderate-income neighborhoods.



Provide affordable and quality health care and promote an environment of health and well-being in every community.

Mayors share a responsibility for the health and well-being of our communities, which includes ensuring access to comprehensive and affordable health care; a robust and coordinated system of care that aligns community health centers, hospitals, local health departments, and other providers; walkable/bikeable neighborhoods; easy access to public transit; and affordable healthy foods.

Our nation's mayors are committed to creating healthy communities and ensuring access to high-quality health care for all Americans. The federal government should do its part:

Preserve patient protections that have bipartisan support.

The American people don't want Congress to take away people's health care, they want Congress to move beyond

the partisan bickering and entrenched positions to move this country forward. Millions of Americans have gained insurance under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and the law has been instrumental in bringing about insurance reforms from which we all benefit. The ACA has improved the lives of many Americans, and more should be done to strengthen the program and guarantee affordable health care coverage.

Any new proposal must protect the millions of Americans who rely on Medicaid or state exchanges without passing the cost on to the state and local government, and must include increased mental health and substance use disorder benefits.

Mayors want to work with Congress and the president to make sure that any health care proposal will reduce the long-term growth of health care costs for businesses and government; protect families from bankruptcy or debt because of those costs; guarantee choice of doctors and health plans; invest in prevention and wellness; improve patient safety and quality of care; ensure affordable, quality health coverage for all Americans; maintain coverage when someone changes or loses a job; and end barriers to coverage for people with pre-existing medical conditions.

There are important provisions of the ACA, which have bipartisan support, that are working well and should be retained in any legislation related to our health care system. Such legislation must:

- guarantee coverage for those with pre-existing conditions and the elderly;
- maintain funding for Medicaid without block granting it to the states;
- eliminate lifetime and annual limits;
- include coverage for essential health benefits, including ambulatory patient care, prescription drugs, emergency care, mental health services,

rehabilitation, prevention and wellness, lab services, pediatric care, and maternity and newborn care;

- allow children to remain on their parents' health plan through age 26;
- support efforts to prevent infectious diseases and chronic illnesses by fully funding the Prevention and Public Health Fund (PPHF); and
- provide coverage for preventive services at no additional cost.

Increase Support for Substance Abuse Prevention, Intervention, Treatment, and Recovery Services

The opioid epidemic is a national emergency, and cities need a strong federal/local partnership to meet the challenge at all levels to address this growing epidemic:

- Develop naloxone training programs, ensure first responders have access to naloxone, and urge physicians to follow new CDC guidelines on opioid prescribing best practices.
- Fully fund the recently enacted Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (115-198).
- Pass criminal justice reform legislation that would improve and reduce the interactions between mentally ill individuals and the criminal justice system, and divert nonviolent drug offenders into treatment instead of prison.
- Maintain the Office of National Drug Control Policy as a focal point for federal efforts to address the growing problem of substance abuse in our nation's cities.
- Implement the recommendations found in the Surgeon General's report, "Facing Addiction in America."
- Fully fund SAMHSA's Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grants and HRSA's substance abuse prevention and treatment programs.
- Convene a National Task Force on Addiction Recovery to identify the gaps in recovery services, examine and



share best practices, and make recommendations for action at the federal, state, and local levels for the provision of prevention, treatment, social supports, and long-term care needed to keep residents in recovery from addiction healthy.

Invest in a Broad Range of Mental Health Services that Support Diverse Populations, Including Veterans and the Homeless

The mental health and well-being of its citizens is the mandate and responsibility of every level of government. Someone with a mental illness should never be afraid to seek treatment and support in their community, and they should be able to do so without fear of stigma or ridicule.

The 21st Century Cures Act, bipartisan legislation passed in 2016 by Congress, created a strong road map to increase the tools we need to better identify those with mental and emotional health needs.

Mayors would welcome the opportunity to partner with leaders in Washington to better serve our veterans, homeless residents, and others in our community who need access to mental health services and treatment. Immediate actions mayors support:

- Develop clear processes and protocols for data collection around mental health and the criminal justice system.
- Ensure that any health care reform includes parity coverage for mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- Establish grant programs for initiatives with a record of support for veterans, the homeless, and others in our community with mental health needs and programs that specifically address trauma and suicide prevention.

- Include diversion initiatives in criminal justice reform legislation that will prevent incarceration of those with mental health problems who don't commit violent crimes.

Strengthen Incentives and Delivery Systems for More Local Food Production, Sustainable Farming Practices, and Better Access to Affordable and Healthy Food Options

According to the CDC, more than one-third (36.5%) of U.S. adults suffer from obesity, which is a risk factor for heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. The medical costs for people who are obese are almost \$1,429 higher annually than those of average-weight people. Obesity has a disparate impact on minorities and lower-income families.

Mayors across the country are leading healthy community initiatives that address food access, health, and economic issues holistically. Removing stigmas in the community, focusing on our most distressed neighborhoods, and using data to drive healthy solutions is key to our success. Mayors support the development of a comprehensive national food policy strategy that:

- feeds the hungry, supports small farmers in urban and rural areas, and promotes access to healthy and affordable foods for all residents;
- strengthens incentives and delivery systems to encourage more local food production and distribution, environmentally sustainable farming practices, and better access to fresh food;
- invests in programs that help communities develop retail markets, food-based businesses, increased access to farmers markets, and farm-to-cafeteria programs that bring locally grown food into school lunch programs and hospitals;

- supports healthy local and regional food systems, including sufficient levels of funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which has helped lift 4.6 million Americans out of poverty in 2015;
- reauthorizes school breakfast and lunch programs;
- improves access to affordable healthy foods and eliminates food deserts in cities; and
- fully funds the CDC's Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH), which addresses tobacco use, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity.



Invest in Medical Research and Biotechnology to Lead the Battle Against Disease

Across America, city health departments are engaged in educating citizens, supporting public health care providers, and conducting prevention activities and health screenings that keep people healthier and save lives.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is an important partner for cities and their universities that have medical research facilities, and for the growing biotechnology industries in many of our communities. Mayors strongly urge Congress to increase investment in NIH to support ongoing and important research against chronic diseases.