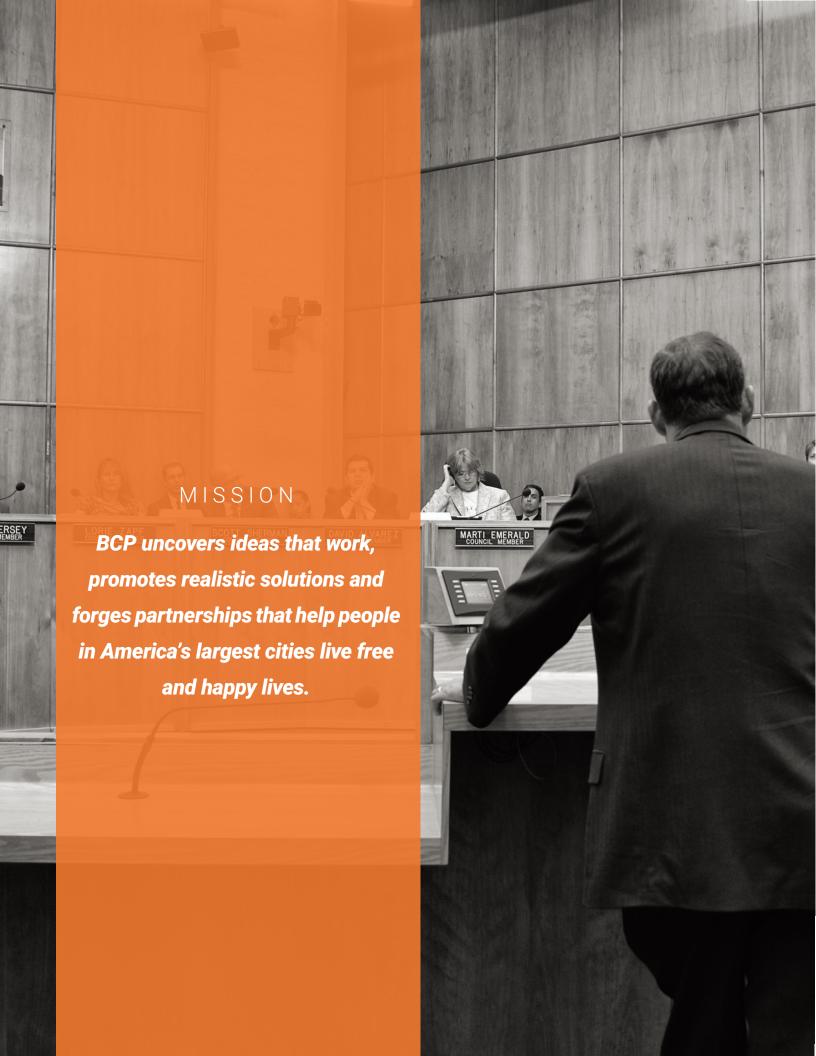


**INGENUITY UNBOUND** 

# LOCAL POLICIES TO EXPAND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

How poverty-fighting nonprofits can engage city hall to unleash the potential of your whole community



## LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR LOCAL IMPACT

hile there is much talk about the government needing to "do something" to help people in poverty, the most simple and effective solutions often involve "undoing something."

Local policy decisions can create barriers—often unintended—to building housing, acquiring childcare, or obtaining a job.

The harms are often concentrated on those who are least able to bear them, and who happen to be least likely to show up to a city meeting to point out their loss. That's where faith and nonprofit leaders come in, who can advocate for sensible local policies that make it less expensive to be poor. In the end, sound policies unleash the ingenuity of capable people and help the whole community flourish.

This guide assembles best practices that have a significant impact on people in poverty. We'll cover topics like reducing barriers to employment, expanding housing stock to lower prices, ensuring child-care regulations are sensibly calibrated to balance safety and supply, improving public transportation, and preventing abuse in the criminal justice system.

#### CONTENTS

2

HOW TO APPROACH CITY HALL: A
PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO SHAPING LOCAL POLICY

7

REMOVING BARRIERS TO WORK AND REBUILDING COMMUNITIES

10

AFFORABLE, ABUNDANT HOUSING STARTS AT CITY HALL

13

CHILDCARE: OLD SOLUTIONS
TO NEW PROBLEMS

16

IMPROVING ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

20

ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY TO MORE JUST CRIMINAL JUSTICE

25

A LETTER FROM TRUE CHARITY'S JAMES WHITFORD

26

**SNAPSHOT SUMMARIES** 

28

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS** 



## HOW TO APPROACH CITY HALL: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SHAPING LOCAL POLICY

Local government is the front line of governance, where decisions about policing, housing, education and infrastructure shape our daily lives. Working with your local leaders, both elected and career, is a powerful way to ensure those decisions best serve those you are dedicated to helping.

#### By Patrick Tuohey, Policy Director, Better Cities Project

Approaching city hall can be intimidating. They have schedules and structures that are unfamiliar and even seem counterproductive. Much of the process may be the result of a slow accumulation of practices no one can justify, or even explain, but seem easier to deal with

than to reform. It is important to understand the vast number of men and women you will be dealing with are very much interested in serving their community, albeit under considerable constraints.

City Hall may project an image of professionalism and order—stately buildings, polished presentations—but

"Cities failed their residents when they undertook endeavors for which local government powers are not required. [...] Fortunately, there is enormous precedent for nonprofit and commercial fulfillment of needs and demands in these areas. Cities have done a disservice to residents by using current and future tax dollars to discourage such private solutions."

#### BCP Fellow Mark Moses, The Municipal Financial Crisis

behind the scenes, it's often a patchwork of limited resources, unclear goals and staff stretched thin. The reality is not that public servants are uncaring, but that they're overwhelmed. They want to succeed but may not have the tools, time or clarity to make bold changes.

As the leader of a charity, you are more than an advocate. You are a subject matter expert. You understand the struggles of the community you are serving, and you do so not because it is your job, but because it is your calling. When local leaders understand that you are an ally in addressing the issues plaguing the community, they will be less likely to see you as a competitor or as just another special interest organization with demands.



## **SNAPSHOT**

Avoid the temptation to show up to City Hall with a polished proposal. Instead, visit with elected and career staff to understand the challenges they face. There may be very real barriers to moving forward. Instead, listen as you would in any intake interview. Then proceed accordingly.

- Build a coalition
- Visit City Hall to listen and learn
- Be a resource
- Offer solutions
- Play the long game

True Charity video: https://bcp.fyi/cityhall



Effective advocacy requires more than passion—it demands strategy, preparation and persistence. Merely stating your dedication to the cause is not sufficient. Here's how to work with city hall effectively, distilled from best practices and my own reflections on engaging with municipal policy.

# UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF ADVOCACY

In many ways your role is much more than advocacy, but we should spend a moment understanding the term. Advocacy is a cornerstone of democracy. It's your opportunity to communicate concerns, propose solutions and hold leaders accountable. Rooted in the First Amendment's protections for speech and petition, advocacy gives everyday citizens a seat at the table. While critics often dismiss this as mere political positioning or the domain of wealthy interest groups, it's also how neighborhood associations, nonprofits and grassroots movements make their voices heard. By doing so, you assert your role in shaping policies that affect you directly.

However, your goal here is not merely to steer policy or public money. You are here to work with city leaders, shoulder to shoulder, in serving the community. Their challenge is your challenge, and your victory is their victory.

#### **PREPARATION IS KEY**

Your work begins long before you enter city hall. Understand the issue you're advocating for inside and out. Gather data, anecdotes and examples that highlight both the problem and its potential solutions. These may include the numbers of men and women in need, the trends over time, the cost to taxpayers of the problem and the benefits in time and money of addressing the problem.

While clear, fact-based arguments are harder to dismiss, you have an additional weapon: direct contact with the men and women who deal with these issues in flesh and blood. Marshall the abstract facts, but be able to relate it to the lives of the people you serve.

Tailor your message to the local level. Citing how policies affect specific neighborhoods or city programs shows you've done your homework and are not just momentarily driven to react. City leaders will be more willing to enter into a long-term relationship with a knowledgeable advocate than with someone merely outraged by an event or headline.

Before making your pitch, take time to truly understand



the people inside city hall. Ask about their priorities, the challenges they face, and the constraints they operate under. Think of it like an intake interview. As in ministry, don't lead with a plan—lead with ears. Show that you're not there to criticize, but to collaborate.

#### **KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

City hall isn't monolithic. Research the council members and career officials who influence your issue. Understand their voting records, public statements and constituencies. Invite the relevant department head to coffee. Ask them about their priorities and their challenges. What stands in the way of them acting as you would like?

If one council member has a track record of supporting affordable housing, frame your message in ways that matches their priorities. Similarly, anticipate opposition and prepare responses to counter their arguments respectfully but firmly.

#### **BUILD COALITIONS**

Rarely does one person sway an entire city government. Partner with organizations, neighborhood groups and other advocates to amplify your voice. A coalition demonstrates widespread support, whether

it's business owners uniting against burdensome regulations or residents advocating for safer streets. Diverse allies bring credibility and strength to your cause.

A second value of working with others is to avoid duplication of services or schedules in their delivery. You want to demonstrate to city leaders that charities are capable of delivering services effectively and consistently. Coalitions allow you to set standards across charities and ensure a high level of competency.

#### **MAKE YOUR CASE CLEARLY**

When the time comes to present your case, be concise. Elected officials and staff juggle countless issues daily. Start with a clear summary of what you're asking for, followed by supporting evidence. Personal stories can be powerful but anchor them with data. And don't assume policymakers are experts on your issue—educate them without condescension.

# ENGAGE RESPECTFULLY AND FOLLOW UP

Respect is the foundation of effective advocacy. Acknowledge the challenges of governance and avoid attacks. Even if you disagree, recognize that city officials

Change rarely happens overnight. Stay engaged beyond a single issue or vote. Attend council meetings, join advisory committees and build ongoing relationships with city staff and officials. The more familiar they are with you, the more likely they'll take your calls—and your concerns—seriously.

are balancing competing demands. After meetings, send thank-you notes summarizing your key points and any next steps. Persistence matters—sometimes change requires multiple visits, calls and emails.

# STAY TRANSPARENT AND ACCOUNTABLE

If you're part of an organization, ensure your efforts align with nonprofit rules, which allow advocacy within certain limits. Transparency builds trust; disclose any affiliations and be honest about your objectives. Credibility is your most valuable asset.

# BE THE SOLUTION, NOT JUST THE CRITIC

City leaders are inundated with complaints. Stand out by offering practicable solutions. If you're advocating for affordable housing, suggest partnerships with nonprofits or strategies to streamline building codes. Demonstrating that you're part of the solution makes officials more likely to see you as a partner rather than an adversary.

Consider the story of Free Hot Soup in Kansas City, Missouri—a group of well-meaning volunteers organized online and distributed meals to the homeless throughout the city. But, in reaction to complaints from neighbors, city health department staff broke up the service and poured bleach into pots of soup, arguing the volunteers were not licensed to serve meals. While this

was an overreach, it underscores the risk of operating outside the system. A relationship with city staff might have turned confrontation into cooperation.

Conversely, the Jimmy Hale Mission in Birmingham, Alabama was approached by city staff and asked to take over the city's warming stations. The charity was well-respected and seen as possessing competencies the city did not. This is the result of not only effectively meeting needs, but of having a good relationship with local leaders.

#### THE LONG GAME

Change rarely happens overnight. Stay engaged beyond a single issue or vote. Attend council meetings, join advisory committees and build ongoing relationships with city staff and officials. The more familiar they are with you, the more likely they'll take your calls—and your concerns—seriously.

Working with city hall involves risk. You may face misunderstanding, resistance or even pressure to dilute your mission. Enter partnerships with clear eyes, humility, and boldness—knowing your work is sacred, your voice matters and your service can inspire change.

Your work with city hall isn't just about influencing decisions; it's about participating in democracy. With preparation, respect and persistence, you can ensure your voice makes a difference in serving your community. City leaders often want to do the right thing but need help seeing the path forward. Be that guide.



# REMOVING BARRIERS TO WORK AND REBUILDING COMMUNITIES

Too often, legal and economic barriers make it nearly impossible to return to society. For many, even small debts or minor criminal records lead to blocked job opportunities, denied licenses and dead ends. That's not just unfair—it's unsafe.

By Stephen Slivinski, Senior Fellow, Cato Institute, and Chad Reese, Senior Policy Advisor, Institute for Justice

Criminal justice reform is often seen as a political "third rail"—tangled in debates over policing, incarceration and public safety. But while passions run hot over who gets arrested or how officers do their jobs, there's wide consensus on a more basic question: What happens after someone has served their time?

The answer, too often, is that legal and economic barriers make it nearly impossible to return to society. For many, even small debts or minor criminal records lead to blocked job opportunities, denied licenses and dead ends. That's not just unfair—it's unsafe. The harder we make it to rejoin the workforce, the more likely people are to fall back into illegal activity. Reforming these hid-

den rules is one of the most important things cities and states can do to build stronger, safer communities.

# THE TWO SIDES OF ECONOMIC DISADVANTAGE

Low-income urban communities face two compounding challenges. First, job opportunities are scarce. While some cities thrive, others struggle under the weight of high taxes, overregulation and barriers to entrepreneurship. Starting a business can involve dozens of steps, weeks of delay and thousands in fees.

Second, incarceration rates remain stubbornly high in many of these same places. That leaves thousands of people returning from prison each year, trying to rebuild their lives in neighborhoods that already lack opportu-



#### **SNAPSHOT**

States and cities don't need to wait for federal reform. They can act now to remove the most harmful barriers to reentry and work. Steps include:

- Eliminate or narrow "good moral character" clauses to only disqualify applicants when the past offense is directly related to the job.
- Allow pre-screening for licenses, so applicants know in advance whether their record is disqualifying.
- Reduce the number of low-income occupations that require licenses, especially when the risk to the public is negligible.
- End or exempt addiction treatment providers from certificate-of-need laws, which let entrenched providers block new entrants—even when demand is high.

**True Charity content:** 

https://bcp.fyi/tcreintegration https://bcp.fyi/tcbetterjobs nities. Making it harder for them to work—because of fines, fees or outdated rules—doesn't just hurt them. It hurts the entire community.

# WHEN SMALL DEBTS BECOME BIG BARRIERS

So-called "clean hands" laws are one of the most glaring examples of counterproductive policy. These laws, on the books in cities and states nationwide, bar people from receiving or renewing business licenses, driver's licenses or occupational permits if they owe money to the government.

On paper, that may sound fair. If someone has a long history of tax evasion or fraud, it's reasonable to pause before granting a license. But in practice, these laws are triggered by small infractions—late water bills, traffic tickets or fines incurred during incarceration. For people already struggling to get back on their feet, they're a brick wall.

Take Yohance Lacour, who learned leatherworking while in prison and wanted to open a business after his release. But while he was locked up, a car registered in his name accumulated fines. Because he didn't know and couldn't pay, Chicago's clean hands law blocked his business license. No notice, no hearing, no recourse.

These laws don't just apply to entrepreneurs. In nearly half the states, unpaid court fees can block a person from renewing their driver's license. That may not seem like a big deal—until you realize that, for many people, a car is the only way to get to work, pick up kids or buy groceries.

A report from the Fines and Fees Justice Center shows that some states use fines not just as punishment, but to fund their criminal justice systems. That creates a perverse incentive to stack small debts onto people least able to pay—and then penalize them when they can't.

Some places are changing course. Washington, D.C., for instance, recently raised the debt threshold that blocks license renewals from \$100 to \$1,000. That small tweak means fewer people will be shut out of legal work because of a single missed bill.

# BUREAUCRACY VS. LOCAL BUSINESS

Even for those not caught by clean hands laws, starting a business in many cities is harder than it should be. The permitting process is often opaque, slow and biased toward big firms.

Large employers can navigate the red tape. They have lawyers, consultants and political influence. But small and homegrown businesses—especially those launched by people with limited means—don't get the same treatment. These firms are the biggest employers in most cities, yet local policies too often slow them down.

Cities should take simple steps:

- Reduce unnecessary paperwork.
- Move applications online.
- Assign staff to help applicants navigate the process.
- Set and enforce deadlines, with refunds when bureaucrats fail to deliver.

These aren't partisan proposals. They're just good governance—and the foundation of inclusive economic growth.

# LICENSING AND THE 'GOOD MORAL CHARACTER' PROBLEM

Beyond city permitting, state-level occupational licensing rules present their own hurdles. Originally intended to protect consumers, these laws now often serve as gatekeepers, especially for people with criminal records.

Roughly one in five American workers now needs a license to work, and more than 19 million have felony convictions. Yet in many states, licensing boards can deny applications based on vague "good moral character" clauses—even if the offense was unrelated to the job.

Alabama, for example, allows blanket license denials for people with criminal records. Boards don't have to consider rehabilitation, job history or time since the conviction. And applicants have no right to appeal.

What's worse, people often don't find out they're inel-

igible until after they've spent months and thousands of dollars on training. In some states, prisons offer job training programs—like barbering—only to deny licenses for those same jobs after release.

Cities add to the problem. Some, like Denver and Detroit, require licenses for dozens of low-risk jobs like window washing or snowplowing. These requirements rarely enhance safety but consistently reduce opportunity.

#### PRACTICAL POLICY FIXES

States and cities don't need to wait for federal reform. They can act now to remove the most harmful barriers to reentry and work. Steps include:

- Eliminate or narrow "good moral character" clauses to only disqualify applicants when the past offense is directly related to the job.
- Allow pre-screening for licenses, so applicants know in advance whether their record is disqualifying.
- Reduce the number of low-income occupations that require licenses, especially when the risk to the public is negligible.
- End or exempt addiction treatment providers from certificate-of-need laws, which let entrenched providers block new entrants—even when demand is high.

# SAFER COMMUNITIES START WITH OPPORTUNITY

Research consistently shows that stable employment is one of the most powerful tools to reduce recidivism. When people have a chance to work, they're less likely to return to prison and more likely to contribute to their neighborhoods.

Yet far too often, government policy gets in the way. Clean hands laws, burdensome licenses and bureaucratic delays trap people in cycles of poverty and punishment.

We can change that. The solutions aren't radical. They're modest, bipartisan and proven to work. All they require is a commitment to fairness—and a recognition that second chances aren't just good politics. They're good policy.



## AFFORABLE, ABUNDANT HOUSING STARTS AT CITY HALL

Let's start with the basics: America has a housing problem. We're behind on housing production by about 4-7 million units. And home ownership—a core component of the American dream and one of the primary tools Americans (particularly young families) use to build wealth—is out of reach.

#### By Greg Brooks, President, Better Cities Project

If you ask someone from the pro-housing Yes In My Back Yard (YIMBY) movement, they'll blame everyone from greedy developers to their counterpart NIMBYs fighting development at every turn, skittish local officials and a host of other real and imagined shadows under the bed.

Depending on the community, some or all of those inputs might be true. But basic math does most of the heavy lifting here: Without enough housing options, prices rise. When cities make it more expensive to build, prices rise. And when neighbors who built and bought their homes under very different economic conditions restrict what can be done, prices rise. Local wins are a matter of being brilliant at the basics:

- Focus locally and show up
- Map out small steps with a high chance of success
- Assume the other side might have a point

#### **FOCUS LOCALLY AND SHOW UP**

Focusing locally makes sense, both because many barriers to more housing are local and because it's easier to drive change with a city council than an entire state legislature. State-level reforms are possible and increasingly frequent, but they're a much heavier lift.

After you find that focus? Showing up is the absolute minimum baseline for any local housing reform. I'm a planning commissioner in my community, so I've got a front-row seat to projects the community loves and hates. And the experience in my town is consistent with others:

- People who oppose projects show up consistently and in force; people who support projects do not.
- Both sides often show up at incorrect points in the process. For example, if you want to support or op-

pose a project that's fully allowed under current zoning and land-use regulations the right point of engagement is when those regulations are being updated, not when the project is being considered.

# MAP OUT SMALL STEPS WITH A HIGH CHANCE OF SUCCESS

It's tempting, to paraphrase an old meme, to look at your community's housing situation and think: Reform all the things! And a few (very few!) communities around the country have done just that, often after years or even decades of groundwork.

Instead: Build your effort around one actionable, measurable and realistic reform at a time. Move from small win to small win, gaining influence and experience as you go.

Let's say you live in a fast-growing community with expensive land driving high housing costs. There are a lot of policy solutions for that, all the way up to state level reforms. But one of the most direct and localized solutions would be reforming zoning and setback requirements to allow more homes, on smaller lots, per acre. Here's why that fits the mold of a good potential local reform:

- It's directly actionable. With a bit of thinking and input, you can put a ready-to-adopt idea in front of a city council—something that's nearly always better than vague calls for more housing or community dialogue.
- It focuses on building homes rather than apartments. We can debate (and your community will endlessly debate) whether more apartments are good or bad for a community. What's less debatable is that most communities, most of the time, will resist new high-density multifamily housing more than they'll resist smaller owner-occupied homes. Pick battles you can win.
- Others have done it before. Local elected bodies seldom have a large appetite for risk and public officials always like seeing that a reform has been successfully implemented elsewhere.



## **SNAPSHOT**

Although there are avenues for state reform, housing and the policies around it are fundamentally local issues requring local action.

- What seems like dry technical matters zoning, setbacks and the ability to build ADUs is in fact one of the quickest paths to real reform. Revolution-now thinking around things like social housing may feel like thinking big, but it also risks getting in the way of progress.
- Assume the other side—people who fear change in their community— has a point and address reform from the desire of creating a win-win. Dismissing their ideas doesn't advance yours.

True Charity resources: https://bcp.fyi/tchousing

# ASSUME THE OTHER SIDE MIGHT HAVE A POINT

Just as in our broader politics, it's popular in local housing-reform circles to turn both the overall debate and nearly every specific battle into an us-vs.-them tribal war. People who are worried about the future of their community, who simply don't like change or—yes—are worried about maintaining their property values are vilified.

You can disagree with their priorities. And if they're nasty about it you can disagree with their tactics. But it's a mistake to let that disagreement turn into blanket dismissal of their concerns. NIMBYs vote and (as I mentioned earlier) show up at public meetings, just like you. And because they're arguing for maintenance of the status quo most of the time, they're the safer option for local officials to listen to.

Better: Pursue housing reforms that give your opponents a partial victory as well.

There are limits to this approach—small, upscale communities comprised of single-family homes are not typically welcoming of multifamily development, for example, and it can be hard to find common ground. But looking at reforms that provide more/faster/cheaper housing and don't reflexively threaten the concerns of established suburban neighborhoods isn't caving on what you're trying to do; it's identifying winnable battles.

#### **REFORMS TO PURSUE**

Every community is different, but few communities have all of these boxes checked:

Legalize smaller, denser housing: This can mean houses on smaller lots, more apartments, duplexes in single-family neighborhoods or other changes—all of which increase supply at a lower price point than traditional big-house-on-a-big-lot single-family development. Addressing restrictive policies, including minimum lot size requirements, density limits and prohibitions against mixed-use developments (apartments in commercial zones) can lead to more affordable housing at scale.

**Legalize accessory dwelling units:** Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are independent residences located on the same lot as a single-family house, often in basements or above garages. ADUs diversify housing stock and

# PRO TIP: RESIST REVOLUTION-FIRST THINKING

Many pro-housing advocates engage in magical, revolution-first thinking: Yes, we need to fix housing, but we can't do that until there's a full light rail system in the city. Yes, we need to fix housing, but not until everyone has a living wage. Yes, we need to fix housing... but first? Revolution!

That's fun to think about. But it's not practical and it doesn't move the ball forward.

Getting more—and more affordable—housing built, even in just a single community, is the policy equivalent of a long war. And long wars are won by winning small battles, one at a time.

make more efficient use of already-existing homes. They're a win-win for tenants and property owners, providing affordable rental units as well as benefits to homeowners.

Eliminate or reduce parking requirements: Cities often require new buildings in a designated zone to have a certain number of designated parking spaces based on projected occupancy; the requirements often result in an oversupply of parking. Eliminating parking minimums in Los Angeles led developers to build more homes and convert old buildings into housing, helping to stimulate neighborhood revitalization.

More quickly and predictably approve developments that meet zoning laws: Getting projects approved is often slow, costly, unpredictable and discretionary. The loudest voices are often existing homeowners in the area opposed to new development and are wealthier than the beneficiaries of new housing. All of this contributes significantly to project costs, which is then reflected in rents and sale prices. Establishing by-right development processes and more predictable permitting can increase the supply of housing by adding certainty to the process for builders.

And if you're feeling more aggressive? Reason magazine writer Christian Britschgi has a fantastic list of increasingly off-the-wall, big-move ideas for reform.



# CHILDCARE: OLD SOLUTIONS TO NEW PROBLEMS

American childcare has lots of problems. The chief is cost. According the to the U.S. Department of Labor, "In 2018, median childcare prices for one child ranged from \$4,810 (\$5,357 in 2022 dollars) to \$15,417 (\$17,171 in 2022 dollars) depending on provider type, children's age, and county population size. These price ranges are equivalent to between 8.0% to 19.3% of median family income."

#### By Dr. Michael McShane, Director of National Research, EdChoice

Anyone who sat through an Economics 101 class knows there is a relationship between supply and demand. One way to decrease the price of something is to increase its supply.

Unfortunately, childcare appears to be trending in the

wrong direction. According to the childcare advocacy group Childcare Aware, "From December 2019 to March 2021, we found a total of 8,899 child care centers closed in 37 states for which we had data. In that same time period, 6,957 licensed family child care (FCC) programs (also known as home-based care) closed in 36 states. This represents a 9% loss in licensed centers and a 10% loss in licensed FCC programs." Childcare





#### **SNAPSHOT**

Childcare costs and supply are a serious barrier to participation in the workforce and a source of worry for millions of parents. Local governments have a role to play in easing the burden:.

- Conduct cost-benefit analyses for childcare regulations
- Promote Childcare Choice
- Support Onsite Childcare

**True Charity video:** https://bcp.fyi/tcchildcare

workers have been heading for the doors, citing low wages and few benefits, and efforts to increase educational requirements risk further constricting supply.

But cost isn't the only issue. Parents want childcare that is safe, appropriate and convenient. Who can blame them?

Childcare, or a lack thereof, can be a serious barrier to participation in the workforce. As the U.S. Chamber of Commerce reported, "The childcare barrier is among the reasons why the U.S. currently has over six million unemployed workers and an additional 1.6 million marginally attached workers, as it prevents many parents from participating in the workforce."

Parents are staying out of the workforce or working reduced hours because they cannot find childcare. High costs are eating into the discretionary spending families could otherwise use to support local businesses. And it goes without saying that the stresses on parents and children have effects that are harder to calculate but are obviously there.

Lack of childcare is holding back many urban economies, and if cities want to improve the quality of life of their citizens, solving the problem of childcare is a great first step.

Luckily, there are a few simple things that cities can do to make themselves more hospitable to childcare providers. More providers can help offer options for families and more options for families can put downward pressure on prices. It's a win for everyone.

# CONDUCT COST-BENEFIT ANALYSES FOR REGULATIONS

Federal, state and local policymakers can think up any number of potential regulations to govern childcare facilities. Advocacy groups have their hobby horses that they would like to see all centers do. Community members have opinions about what kinds of businesses should be allowed to operate in their neighborhoods. Added together, these regulations can become a dense thicket of bureaucracy that potential providers have to cut through in order to operate.

Angela Rachidi of the American Enterprise Institute outlines the problem,

"State licensing agencies say that government regulations have contributed significantly to the decline in child care providers, and it is easy to understand why. In my home state of Wisconsin, the licensing rules for family child care providers run 37 pages long. Licensed family child care providers must be inspected at least every two years (more frequently if the state desires) and the checklist of requirements that must be met totals over 400. If family child care providers—who generally look after four to eight children in their home—want to operate in Wisconsin, they must adhere to these requirements."

Childcare centers and home-based care deal with vulnerable customers—young children—and the desire to

ensure protection and quality is totally reasonable. That said, there is a big difference between keeping children safe and micromanaging childcare providers. Rachidi gives examples of some of the 400 requirements, including that children have at least three toys to choose from during play time and that nap time is mandatory for children under five with more than four consecutive hours in the center.

Policymakers need to take a good, hard look at what they're asking of childcare providers. They need to not simply outline the benefits of potential regulations, but also their costs. Before proposing new regulations on childcare facilities, there should be a thorough cost-benefit analysis that accounts for the costs of complying with the regulations, record keeping, reporting and everything else that goes along with them.

#### **PROMOTE CHOICE**

Childcare takes place in different places, at different times and for different reasons. There is center-based care, where children attend a formal childcare center. There are home-based centers that operate like small childcare centers out of someone's home, and there is family, friend and neighbor care, where children are cared for by adults with some connection to their family in an informal setting.

Each of these arrangements has its upsides and downsides. There is no one "right" location for all children. There are, however, better and worse childcare practices, and it is important that regardless of where children are cared for, they are in a safe and nurturing environment.

The best thing that localities can do is support all types of childcare providers. By partnering with institutions of higher education or non-profits, they can provide assistance and professional development for childcare providers regardless of their location.

A model for such an organization is Connecticut's All Our Kin. All Our Kin "trains, supports, and sustains" more than 1,100 family childcare providers. All Our Kin conducts classes and workshops for childcare providers, host conferences and have consultants that work directly to demonstrate model lessons and

strategies aligned to appropriate childcare standards.

Localities could host organizations like All Our Kin and work to develop networks of childcare providers. They could give space for professional development seminars and workshops. They could help publicize the resources that are available to childcare providers.

#### SUPPORT ONSITE CHILDCARE

One of the recommendations from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's "Roadmap" for supporting working parents is for businesses to create onsite childcare facilities. This makes a great deal of sense. Being able to drop your child off as you're walking into work saves time lost in morning rush hour traffic spent driving from home to a childcare facility to work, and the same in reverse in the afternoon. It also makes sense for those on shift work whose hours don't perfectly align with traditional childcare facility hours. If the workplace knows when people are working, it can create childcare schedules aligned to that. Finally, there is much to be said about parents being close to their children during the day. If the child needs anything, isn't feeling well or is upset, rather than having to leave work to drive somewhere to deal with the issue, the parent could simply walk a couple of minutes over to the childcare center.

Local governments should support businesses looking to provide this service for their employees. Some might want to operate the center themselves, so working with them to make sure their space is up to code, that their staff is complying with any local regulations and the like could help make it easier for them to do so. Others might want to contract with an external provider to operate the center in space given by the employer. In this case, local governments could work to identify and match employers and providers.

By taking these three simple steps, cities can increase the number of quality providers and push down costs. Doing those things will help working parents stay in the workforce, keep more of their paychecks and rest easy knowing that their children are in a safe and nurturing environment. What a great foundation for a prosperous community.



## IMPROVING ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION

Mass transit systems are critical to the movement of low-income and disabled residents throughout the country. These systems are often lifeline and last-resort systems that allow residents to access jobs, daycare, banks and grocery stores. Unfortunately, mass transit systems in the United States face two barriers to innovation: inflexible union contracts and transit system design.

#### By Baruch Feigenbaum, Senior Managing Director, Transportation Policy, Reason Foundation

After World War II, when private transit agencies were hemorrhaging money and riders due to suburbanization, the federal government stepped in and passed the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964. The act provided new funding for state and local governments

that were taking over bankrupt transit agencies. However, section 13(c) required agencies accepting federal grants to implement protections for existing employees. These protections include:

 The preservation of rights and benefits of employees under existing collective bargaining agreements;



- The continuation of collective bargaining rights;
- The protection of individual employees against a worsening of their positions in relation to their employment;
- Assurances of employment to employees of acquired transit systems;
- Assurances of priority of reemployment of employees whose employment is ended or who are laid off; and
- Paid training or retraining programs.

Today, public-sector unions are among the most politically powerful groups in the United States and exert outsized influence in the dense, urban areas where the vast majority of mass transit ridership occurs. And section 13(c) freezes the relationship between transit systems and organized labor in the past.

For example, transit systems trying to implement automated technology, reorganize their service or expand their service are subject to this provision. Almost 70% of the cost of transit systems is labor.

Some employees will always be needed to run the sys-

tem including management, emergency services and maintenance personnel. But automated technology is available today. In fact, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's (WMATA) heavy rail system has been able to be operated automatically since 2009. Yet, removing the drivers would be a non-starter in the labor agreement.

Given that we have a large driver shortage in the U.S., labor can be phased out as they retire without requiring layoffs or retraining. Removing drivers and some other staff could reduce costs by up to 50%. As a result, some large systems that are government-subsidized would be close to or completely supported by riders (through taxes, advertising revenue, value capture, etc.) such as the Metropolitan Transit Agency (MTA) of New York and the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART). Other systems which are teetering on the brink of solvency, would be in better fiscal shape.

Other systems might choose to add service—the route connecting a neighborhood and a shopping area might be able to operate 12 times a day instead of six. The transit agency could start up six new routes to better accommodate growth or shifting development



#### **SNAPSHOT**

Work with your local transit agency to make these and other changes:

- Operate frequent, fixed-bus transit service;
- Consolidate bus routes;
- Operate in a grid-like pattern;
- Eliminate transit-vehicles and station nuisances;
- Consolidate bus and microtransit service;
- Consider contracting;
- Adapt employer provided service; and
- Automate some existing train routes and new routes where feasible.

**True Charity video:** https://bcp.fyi/transpvid

patterns. Perhaps there is an area of the city that is developing as a high-tech or biotech center. Put simply, new technology, including automation could be a game-changer if we let it operate.

Transit agencies should also be freed from other burdensome requirements such as Prevailing Wage and Buy America. The Davis-Bacon Act of 1931 requires projects that use any amount of federal funding to pay prevailing wages to workers. Buy America, which has been supported by the last two U.S. Presidents imposes domestic content sourcing requirements on steel, iron and manufactured products used by transit agencies. These provisions can raise material procurement costs, limit sourcing options, create additional administrative burdens and necessitate time-consuming waiver petitions.

The second bucket of reforms is to redesign transit systems. Transit-dependent customers (those who do not have access to an automobile) are more likely to use transit than transit-choice customers (those who do have access to a vehicle but may take transit occasionally). Transit-dependent customers are also more likely to take buses; transit choice customers more likely to take rail. Poor bus service means transit dependent customers cannot reach their job, which means they are often unemployed. As a result, they may depend on government services such as welfare. It's not just good social policy to have a quality bus network, it is good fiscal policy as well.

There are multiple types of transit reform:

- Operate fixed-route bus services on busy roadways, seven days a week 18 hours a day. Most service workers don't work a 9-5 Monday-Friday schedule, yet most bus agencies focus on peak morning period and peak afternoon service and many don't operate on Sunday at all. When Houston expanded its weekend service, ridership increased by 40%.
- Consolidate bus routes. For political goals, many transit systems kept adding new bus routes. Because they operate so many routes, the shortest time between buses was every 15 minutes, with many routes having 30- or 60-minute between service. The most important factor in increasing bus ridership is frequent service. Yet, buses arrived so infrequently on

some routes that transit-dependent riders could not rely on transit to access their jobs.

- Operate service in a grid pattern not a radial pattern. Rail lines often operate in a radial pattern and are designed to feed workers to downtown. This may work well in certain cities, such as New York, for professionals in banking or law, but it doesn't work well in most places where jobs are not concentrated downtown. And it never works for transit-dependent customers. Two Florida State University professors compared two regions similar in size (Broward County, FL that uses a grid- and Tarrant County, TX that uses a radial-design) and found that operating expenses and load factor (the percentage of seats and standing room on the system) were substantially lower for the grid-based system.
- Eliminate nuisances that many cite about riding transit. Ensure vehicles are cleaned regularly. Enforce fare payment, both to enhance revenue, and to reduce criminal activity.
- Consolidate bus with microtransit. In some low-density areas, bus service is not feasible but microtransit can fill holes in the service area. While microtransit does not have fixed routes, a microtransit vehicle would serve a defined geographic area, picking up passengers and taking them to a bus depot or to employment or shopping
- **Consider contracting.** While the challenges of unions, as outlined earlier in the piece, can make contracting challenges, it is easier to contract new routes. And while contracting is far from a panacea for service challenges it can reduce costs and improve service. In contracting, the transit agency operators should solicit (and receive) a minimum of three bids from the contractors as well as the agency's cost to operate service. The transit agency should evaluate each bid for the cost and the quality (how much/the type of service) offered. All contracts should specify each element of transit service (route planning, penalty/bonus for late/early service, maintenance, vehicle cleanliness) to ensure that the agency chooses the contract that benefits riders and taxpayers the most. The initial wave of contracting brought direct savings ranging from

30% to 60%, and it reduced public sector costs of transit delivery as well.

Contracting is the equivalent of public private partnerships (P3s) in transit. The contractor performs the role of the private sector by operating the service and may also plan or change current service offerings. The government ensures that the private entity is honoring the terms of the contract by auditing the service and terminating the contract is the private entity is not abiding by the terms of the contract.

■ Adapt employer-provided service: Some business organizations provide their own transit service to employees. Community Improvement Districts (CIDs) in the Atlanta region are a good example. The Cumberland CID works with through the city of Atlanta to provide a vanpool service, that matches employees who live and work in the same general area. For a small fee, employees ride together for work and receive preferential parking spaces and other perks. In the Perimeter CID, business shuttles are provided throughout the district. Employees who work nearby can ride these shuttles from home to work and back. The shuttles provide an alternative to automobiles.

Following are actions that policy makers and neighborhood leaders can take to make these reforms.

Work with your local transit agency to make the eight changes outlined in this paper. Agencies in Houston and Los Angeles have already made some of these changes:

- Operate frequent, fixed-bus transit service;
- Consolidate bus routes:
- Operate in a grid-like pattern;
- Eliminate transit-vehicles and station nuisances;
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- Automate some existing train routes and new routes where feasible.



# ACCOUNTABILITY IS KEY TO MORE JUST CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Americans encounter the criminal justice system in countless ways. For most Americans, those interactions may be brief, minor inconveniences (like a small speeding ticket), or even positive. But every encounter, from arrest to investigation to court hearings, holds the risk of violating one or more fundamental rights for the accused.

#### By Chad Reese, Senior Policy Advisor, Institute for Justice

State or local laws that govern how government officials interact with the public (and what they are or aren't allowed to do) have the power to either encourage or discourage those rights abuses, and as community leaders, it is possible to advocate for rules that ensure justice for victims without weakening the good that a well-functioning criminal justice system can do.

Even in cases where the reform must come from the state, local leadership is vital to convincing state legislatures to change course. Municipalities are often the front lines of the criminal justice system.

#### **QUALIFIED IMMUNITY**

One of the most important ways to ensure that the criminal justice system works the way it's supposed to is by holding those officials accountable. State and local police departments are responsible for hiring, training and firing their employees, so there need be consequences when one harms a member of the public. Unfortunately, qualified immunity too often blocks justice for many victims, preventing that culture of accountability.

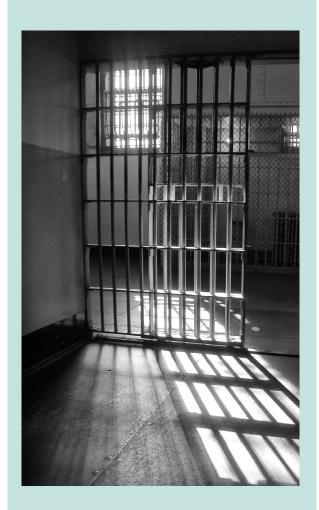
Qualified immunity is a legal doctrine enjoyed by all government officials at the federal, state and local level. It exists as we know it today because of a 1982 Supreme Court decision (Harlow v. Fitzgerald) that involved a whistleblower trying to sue White House aides from the Nixon administration. The whistleblower faced retaliation after speaking out against a weapons program.

Today, it's most-recognized as the legal protection that prevents lawsuits against law enforcement officers for rights violations. The doctrine imposes a "clearly established" test for anyone attempting to bring a federal civil rights lawsuit against a government official. That test requires the victim not only to prove that their rights were violated, but also that a previous court had reached the same conclusion in a case with similar facts, thus making the right so "clearly established" that the officer should have known that his conduct was unconstitutional.

Unfortunately, the test has been interpreted so narrowly that victims have to find a previous case with facts nearly identical to their own case, even when the government official was acting maliciously or intentionally violating the law,. Because some courts stop at that step, they never determine whether or not a right was violated, preventing future victims from pointing to that situation as "clearly establishing" their own right to sue.

Police officers who were accused of stealing nearly a quarter of a million dollars during a search were granted qualified immunity because the court in that case said they had "never addressed whether the theft of property covered by the terms of a search warrant...violates the Fourth Amendment."

All of this means that when something goes wrong in the criminal justice system, whether it's a police officer



## **SNAPSHOT**

Even in cases where the reform must come from the state, local leadership is vital to convincing state legislatures to change course. Municipalities are often the front lines of the criminal justice system.

- Qualified immunity
- Civil asset forfeiture
- Fines and fees

**True Charity content:** https://bcp.fyi/tcjustice

shooting an innocent victim, a Texas mayor ordering the arrest of a city council member who'd spoken out publicly against the mayor, or a highway traffic engineer detaining a truck driver, the victim is left without any recourse.

But states and some cities have the power to change that.

Qualified immunity only exists because the Supreme Court attached it to the federal civil rights law that creates a "cause of action" for federal courts (that's the right to sue someone). But states can create their own cause of action in state courts, and explicitly write into statute that qualified immunity does not apply in those cases.

In a state like New Mexico or Colorado, such cases would instead go directly state court under a state civil rights law. Success still requires a finding that the state violated civil rights, but without the additional hurdle—and expense—of qualified immunity.

The state statute needed to create such an option is fairly simple. All state legislators need to do is to create a cause of action in state court that allows victims to sue for constitutional rights violations. Such a law can also make it easier for state and local governments to fire the offending official, making the criminal justice system safer and more effective for everyone.

At the local level, some cities also have the power to ensure accountability for their own government officials. Much like New York City did in March of 2021, cities can limit the immunity their own employees. For cities with the legal ability to create their own cause of action, the best solution is a model ordinance that looks much like New Mexico's state law.

It's important to know, first, if a city has the legal authority under state law and constitution to enact such an ordinance, but it's also worth noting that doing so may not be as effective in a state with significant preemption authority. In some cases, state law can easily "preempt" local law, making a local solution to ending qualified immunity less viable in places where a state legislature is opposed to the reform and able to end local attempts to enact it.

#### **CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE**

When most people think of property being seized or tak-

en by the government, they usually imagine a drug lord being arrested and having the drugs in their possession put under lock and key. That "forfeiture" power is what the criminal justice system uses when it claims property from an individual. In criminal cases, it often makes sense for the government to seize illegal goods, or a boat that might be used to help a criminal flee the country.

But many Americans don't realize that law enforcement can seize property from individuals never charged with a crime at all. Instead of "criminal forfeiture," which takes property from someone who was actually convicted of a crime, "civil forfeiture" can affect anyone at any time, without ever being convicted or charged.

In many cases, the only thing a victim did "wrong" was carry cash, which law enforcement routinely label as suspicious despite it being perfectly legal and common.

Nearly all states allow police and prosecutors to keep most or all of the proceeds taken from such forfeiture. In other words, if and when property is taken from an innocent person, the police department who took it stands to profit.

The deck is often stacked against victims who try to recover their property. First, a victim must decide that the legal fight to recover their property is worth it. Hiring an attorney to navigate the process can cost thousands of dollars, sometimes more than the value of whatever was taken. In these cases, many people simply walk away, feeling just as violated by their own justice system as would a victim of an armed robbery.

Forfeiture can happen to almost anyone in any circumstance. At a FedEx Express Hub in Indiana, police often seize packages that contain cash, and begin the process to keep it, even without any indications the money is connected to a crime. Worse, prosecutors are not required to charge specific crimes. Out-of-state owners may find it daunting or impossible to fight back.

Forfeiture is regularly tied to claims of drug interdiction, and state police often patrol highways ostensibly looking for drugs. In reality, those efforts can and do take cash from people, even in the absence of drugs or any other evidence of criminality. In Nevada, despite never being charged with a crime, a Marine Corps veteran was detained and had his life savings taken from him.

More than a decade's worth of data show that increasing the number of forfeitures have no effect on crime or drug use. Civil asset forfeiture only creates innocent victims.

The good news is that states can solve this problem and make their criminal justice systems refocus on keeping communities safe instead of counting discretionary funds to purchase equipment.

As local leaders, the first, and best, option is simply to encourage state and local lawmakers to ban civil asset forfeiture for any law enforcement agencies operating under their jurisdiction. North Carolina, New Mexico and Maine have done so already, and rely only on criminal law when it's necessary to forfeit property.

More substantial reform can include a Criminal Forfeiture Process Act that ensures police and prosecutors do not directly profit from forfeiture, and that property owners must be found guilty of a crime before the state completes the seizure process in criminal court.

Forfeiture also happens at the federal level. Federal agencies frequently partner with state and local agencies on forfeiture through a program known as federal "equitable sharing." In "equitable sharing" arrangements, state and local agencies are involved in seizing property, but the forfeiture is essentially outsourced to the federal government. The state and local agencies that participated in the seizure then receive a cut of the proceeds. Equitable sharing may be particularly attractive to agencies in states whose civil forfeiture laws provide greater protection to property owners-or offer agencies a smaller share of the proceeds. To ensure agencies don't circumvent state-law protections against forfeiture abuse, an Anti-Circumvention Forfeiture Act that prevents law enforcement from transferring seized property to the federal government for forfeiture is appropriate.

Short of that, there are other reforms that can rebalance the criminal justice system to preserve property rights. First, it's worth finding out if a state reports forfeiture data accurately and sufficiently. If not, supporting a Seizure and Forfeiture Reporting Act may help those in the community understand the scope of the problem. If a community suffers from forfeiture abuse, proper reporting can highlight it.



# PAGE 24

#### **FINES AND FEES**

Seizing property is not the only way authorities violate property rights. One of the most common ways a justice system can veer off track is by charging excessive fines or illegal fees.

Many fines and fees levied by state and local governments make sense, and are often tied to something dangerous or harmful to others. Reckless driving, for instance, can result in expensive traffic tickets meant to discourage behavior that can lead to costly or even life-threatening accidents.

But excessive fines and arbitrary fees can become abusive. Fees can be charged for something so outlandish that they become their own type of abuse, potentially even being so egregious as to violate the Constitution's 8th amendment prohibiting "excessive fines."

Dunedin, Florida, for instance, continually fined one homeowner for tall grass until his bill with the city was tens of thousands of dollars, and his home was threatened with foreclosure. While away due to his mother's death, the homeowner's lawn service provider also died unexpectedly, leaving him with a massive bill once he learned of the issue. A West Palm Beach woman was charged \$250 per day for having her car parked a few inches off of her driveway, and was eventually told to pay \$165,000.

Many of these types of fines can be imposed through municipal code enforcement, but they can be levied by any level of government. Local leaders can start by simply reviewing codes and identifying places where abuse can emerge.

Ensuring accurate reporting can often highlight problematic areas, or help identify abuse. By working with state lawmakers to pass a Fines and Fees Reporting Act, community leaders can reduce "taxation by citation" abuse.

In order to function properly, a criminal justice system must have the faith of the community it serves. The Department of Justice infamously found that Ferguson, Missouri's targeting of minorities to raise revenue from fines and fees led to "distrust and resentment. that fueled the unrest after the 2014 death of Michael Brown.

In other situations, fines and fees (and the way they're

administered) can turn minor infractions into a lifetime of punishment. These fees can include pretrial or bond fees, diversion fees, conviction fees for prosecution, DNA testing, court security, judges' retirement funds, court operations, probation or parole supervision, custody fees and interest or collection fees assessed when an individual is trying to pay down court debt. In some states, conviction is not required to be held liable for associated fees.

In those situations, passing a Fair Funding for Courts Act does two things. First, it realigns the incentives of the criminal justice system. Instead of treating the accused as a piggy bank, it funds courts in a fair and impartial manner. Second, it actually makes communities safer.

When courts rely on fees from individuals going through the system, it can trap them in debt cycles that lead to recidivism, creating a modern-day debtor's prison.

#### **CONCLUSION**

If the key to a well-functioning criminal justice system is the trust and respect of the community it serves, the key to success is accountability.

Qualified immunity erodes the culture of our criminal justice system by protecting those who violate our constitutional rights.

Civil asset forfeiture empowers police and prosecutors to essentially steal money without charging anyone with a crime.

And unconstitutional fines and fees treat already disenfranchised communities as sources of revenue.

Fortunately, several policy solutions are available, whether it's outright eliminating them in the case of asset forfeiture, finding a state-based alternative to a federal problem like qualified immunity, or changing how fund our courts to guarantee justice for all.

The Institute for Justice (IJ) website contains all state and local level model legislation mentioned in this piece. They are available at ij.org/legislative-advocacy/. IJ's legislative and advocacy teams work regularly with state and local leaders to identify and end rights abuses through meaningful, lasting legislative reform.



Real compassion. Real results.

I am a charity leader. To a lesser extent, I'm also a donor. I am not, however, a policymaker. Nonetheless, I have realized the influence public policy has on my work as a practitioner as well as the direct effects it has on the poor. As a result, I've become more interested in the role of government as it relates to poverty.

Maybe in the past, you've said "Politics just aren't my thing." That's a common sentiment these days, especially as our national government continues to expand beyond its constitutional boundaries, magnifying the disconnect between federal policy and the impact of a vote. However, whether we feel we can have an impact on policy or not, policy impacts us. It may not be "our thing," but we're certainly "its thing." We can't escape it because we're social

Aristotle points this out in Book I of Politics as he argues that the individual is set into a family, families into a village, and villages into the state. He concludes that man is a "political animal" who exists inside this natural political framework because anyone who is somehow isolated from it must be "either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state." If Aristotle was right, then the natural, interdependent relationships between individuals within a family are as important as the connections between families and their village or that of villages with their state. You and I are inextricably linked from our daily lives to the life of our government. To somehow escape that is personally and socially detrimental for, as Aristotle notes, such a scenario would degenerate us into beasts who think we are gods.

We are political creatures. Therefore, we have both a personal need and a social responsibility to understand the policies that impact our lives, families, communities, and especially our neighbors in need. We should not abdicate with a shrug, "Politics just aren't my thing." Instead, we should commit to making it our thing. It matters. This guide, created in partnership with Better Cities Project, is intended to help. Specifically, we hope to equip you with

I have worked to influence policy leaders through a number of avenues including addressing congressional caucuses, testifying before state and federal congressional committees, and informing policy think-tanks on poverty-related issues. More recently (and locally), I testified before our city's zoning and planning commission advocating for rezoning that would advance affordable housing solutions to help address homelessness. For more, including some basic advice on being a policy advocate, visit truecharity.info/legislation.

Compassion compelled me into the poverty work I do. I never thought about advocating for policy reform until I recognized the vital role public policy plays in either providing opportunity for people to escape poverty or perpet-Thanks for joining me as an advocate in your village.

James Whitford True Charity, CEO

## **SNAPSHOT SUMMARIES**

#### SHOWING UP EFFECTIVELY AT CITY HALL

Avoid the temptation to show up to City Hall with a polished proposal. Instead, visit with elected and career staff to understand the challenges they face. There may be very real barriers to moving forward. Instead, listen as you would in any intake interview. Then proceed accordingly.

- Build a coalition
- Visit City Hall to listen and learn
- Be a resource
- Offer solutions
- Play the long game

True Charity video: https://bcp.fyi/cityhall

#### REMOVING BARRIERS TO WORK

States and cities don't need to wait for federal reform. They can act now to remove the most harmful barriers to reentry and work. Steps include:

- Eliminate or narrow "good moral character" clauses to only disqualify applicants when the past offense is directly related to the job.
- Allow pre-screening for licenses, so applicants know in advance whether their record is disqualifying.
- Reduce the number of low-income occupations that require licenses, especially when the risk to the public is negligible.
- End or exempt addiction treatment providers from certificate-of-need laws, which let entrenched providers block new entrants even when demand is high.

**True Charity content:**https://bcp.fyi/tcreintegration
https://bcp.fyi/tcbetterjobs

#### AFFORDABLE, ABUNDANT HOUSING FOR ALL

Although there are avenues for state reform, housing and the policies around it are fundamentally local issues requring local action.

- What seems like dry technical matters zoning, setbacks and the ability to build ADUs is in fact one of the quickest paths to real reform. Revolution-now thinking around things like social housing may feel like thinking big, but it also risks getting in the way of progress.
- Assume the other side people who fear change in their community— has a point and address reform from the desire of creating a win-win. Dismissing their ideas doesn't advance yours.

**True Charity resources:** https://bcp.fyi/tchousing

# CHILDCARE: NEW SOLUTIONS TO OLD PROBLEMS

Childcare costs and supply are a serious barrier to participation in the workforce and a source of worry for millions of parents. Local governments have a role to play in easing the burden:.

- Conduct cost-benefit analyses for childcare regulations
- Promote Childcare Choice
- Support Onsite Childcare

**True Charity video:** https://bcp.fyi/tcchildcare

# TRANSPORTATION ACCESS FOR ALL

Work with your local transit agency to make these and other changes:

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- Consider contracting;
- Adapt employer provided service; and
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#### ACCOUNTABILITY AND A MORE-JUST CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Even in cases where the reform must come from the state, local leadership is vital to convincing state legislatures to change course. Municipalities are often the front lines of the criminal justice system.

- Qualified immunity
- Civil asset forfeiture
- Fines and fees

**True Charity content:** https://bcp.fyi/tcjustice

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Greg Brooks is president and co-founder of Better Cities Project. With more than 30 years of experience spanning journalism public policy and public affairs, he has dedicated his career to uncovering the most effective solutions, explaining them to lawmakers, the press and the public, and driving change that helps everyone live freer, happier lives. He has been published in newspapers across the country, appeared on television discussing current affairs more than 100 times, and serves as a planning commissioner in Carson City, Nevada..

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Chad Reese serves as a Senior Policy Advisor for the Institute for Justice. Through direct advocacy, grassroots organizing, and public policy research, Reese supports policy reforms that promote economic liberty, government accountability, and property rights.



# NEXT STEPS

This guide was created in partnership with True Charity, which champions the resurgence of civil society in the fight against poverty. They specialize in equipping a national network of churches and nonprofits to make their programs more empowering. For more information, visit TrueCharity.us.

BCP can help you explore these and other policy suggestions in depth.

#### **SIGN UP AT BETTER-CITIES.ORG**

Our updates keep tens of thousands of local elected officials and engaged citizens informed about the latest ideas in local-government policy.

#### **GET IN TOUCH**

BCP can help identify specific research and recommendations relevant to your community's challenges, direct you to the right experts for answers and offer presentations related to these and other topics.

Call us at (816) 985-1361 or visit us online at better-cities.org.

#### **BETTER CITIES PROJECT**

#### TRUE CHARITY



