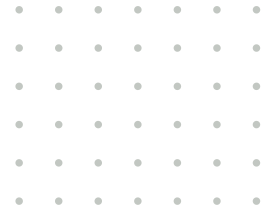




COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES



CALENDAR YEARS: 2025 - 2026



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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Overview

For the first three years of her life, Sharvonne A. Walker and her family lived in a shelter. Her mother worked as a carpenter and educator, but her income was too low to afford rent until they finally got housing assistance. Sharvonne’s mother and brother suffered serious health problems, but help from Social Security, health coverage and nutrition assistance got them through very difficult times.

Sharvonne got an education and works for an organization that provides help to other families. She shared her story in CHN’s blog, [Voices for Human Needs](#). She writes “If we help families survive rocky times rather than fall deeper into poverty, all of us benefit as a society. If we don’t, then millions of stories like mine won’t be possible.”

It is the mission of the Coalition on Human Needs to seek federal investments to ensure that families like Sharvonne’s can get the help they need. Helping people to get through health crises, to secure a place to live and enough to eat means family members can get an education and improve their work and life options. When that happens, Sharvonne is right: all of us benefit.

Every two years, the Coalition on Human Needs enlists expert staff from its [member organizations](#) to update its *Public Policy Priorities*, assembling a comprehensive set of policies aimed at ensuring that people can meet their basic needs and move forward as they choose. These goals have deep roots; they are at least as old as the call for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” The farther away we are from achieving these goals, the farther we are from achieving the ideals of democracy.

These foundational goals cannot be met without access to medical care, care for family members, nutritious food, housing, mobility, education, modern communications, and safety from disaster. Many people can meet these needs through earnings, but for millions of Americans, paying for what they need is growing painfully harder. Nearly [one in four renter households](#) is paying half or more of their income on rent. Surveyed in [August-September, 2024](#), fully 37 percent said they had difficulty paying for their usual household expenses in the past 7 days, and 12 percent said their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in the past week.

People with the lowest incomes suffer the deepest hardships, unsurprisingly. Among households with income below \$25,000, more than 30 percent sometimes or often didn't have enough to eat in the previous week; for households with \$75,000 – under \$100,000, 7 percent were going without enough food. Black, brown and indigenous people are disproportionately poor, with racial/ethnic disparities magnified for children. Poverty for American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic children is well over double the rate for White children; between one in five and one in four children of color are living in poverty.

Reducing poverty and hardship requires federal investments that keep pace with our people's varied needs, and so these Public Policy Priorities detail a wide range of effective programs that require support: health care, food assistance, job training and education, affordable housing, child care and care services for older adults and people with disabilities, treatment for substance use and mental health disorders, and more. There is also support for protections against human-made and natural disasters, which very disproportionately victimize people with low incomes and people of color.

But while a broad range of practical policy solutions are detailed in these pages, CHN recognizes that the nation can only make progress towards its essential goals if its budget and tax decisions are rooted in equity and responsive to need. It is not by chance that so many Americans are poor or near poor, with disproportionate hardship by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status. Allocation of federal resources, through spending or tax decisions, very disproportionately benefits people and corporations with wealth and power. CHN chooses budget and tax policy-making as its "leadership" issues because the decisions made here will drive whether the government will be responsive to need or to entrenched power seeking even more advantage.

In mapping the Coalition on Human Needs' priorities for 2025-2026, we know well that many of those with extreme individual and corporate wealth want to prolong and expand their tax advantages at the cost of more than \$5 trillion over a decade. Powerful interests want to pay for those breaks by massive reductions in human needs spending. They want to use federal budget mechanisms to force cuts and rigid restructuring of health care, nutrition, education, and environmental protections. They would reject major investments in affordable housing and family-sustaining care. The Trump Administration, reflecting these interests, is seizing far greater executive branch power to slash the federal workforce and unilaterally stop funding for programs authorized by Congress, in tandem with seeking restrictive budget measures from Congress. They are dismantling consumer and labor protections to protect corporate power and wealth. Many lawsuits have been filed, challenging the Administration's authority to reject funding, dismantle agencies, and fire federal workers; the outcomes not yet known.

CHN recognizes that today's oligarchs are short-sighted in seeking to starve investments that enable tens of millions of Americans to avoid hardship and advance their own goals. Both short- and long-term growth require us to invest in our people. But adding trillions of dollars to already entrenched wealth is a powerful incentive. Human needs advocates must use every tool at hand to reject more tax breaks and to prevent budget choices that would strangle our nation's capacity to respond to need.

That means opposing efforts to impose rigid restrictions such as block grants or caps on basic needs programs like Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or schemes to privatize Social Security or Medicare. It means opposing bills that pay for tax breaks for the rich with massive cuts to human needs programs. It means fighting back against efforts to slash programs and protections for low-income people as the condition for raising the debt limit.

The policy positions in this document are focused on investing in the resources people need to thrive. That includes protecting and building upon requirements for federal agencies to follow the law to protect consumers, workers, students, and tenants. It also includes a federal workforce that administers programs fairly and efficiently and enforces voting rights and accurate collection of census data to ensure fair redistricting and allocation of federal funds where the need is greatest. CHN will work to support budget and tax decisions that provide justice for immigrants and will oppose squandering federal resources on anti-immigrant enforcement measures that threaten our democracy. CHN will also oppose wastefully excessive payments to military or other government contractors.

These **Public Policy Priorities** recognize that people unable to earn a living wage, to have affordable access to modern communications, and to secure their basic needs are far less able to exercise their rights. These constraints are the goal of oligarchy, and are anathema to democracy.

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COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

CHN Leadership Issues

Issues in this category are cross cutting and affect the entire human needs community. The Coalition will play a leadership role on these issues. Issues in this category will get the highest possible attention from CHN staff where appropriate and feasible. CHN will:

- Advocate for these priorities before Congress and the Administration;
- Organize and actively participate in lobbying visits;
- Hold strategy sessions;
- Initiate sign-on letters and circulate sign-on letters initiated by others;
- Host seminars, briefings and webinars;
- Educate the human needs community and its network on the issues;
- Highlight and provide information on the status of these issues in our emails, resource libraries, and on the Voices for Human Needs blog;
- Update CHN members on their status at regular advocates' meetings.

CHN recognizes that in a time of unprecedented threats and unpredictable opportunities affecting vulnerable people and the services they need, it may be necessary to shift staff resources and coalition focus to issues not now addressed within the Leadership Issues below. Decisions to shift resources will be made based on the significance of the impact on low-income and vulnerable populations, including immigrants, communities of color, and people with disabilities, children and seniors.

The following public policy initiatives are identified as **Leadership Issues**:

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Budget and Appropriations

The federal budget is an expression of our nation's priorities, and an engine for realizing them. Federal investments should spur economic growth that benefits all, reducing inequality and ensuring that all people have access to the building blocks of a decent life. Those include nutritious food, accessible and affordable housing, and high quality health care and medications. It means investing education and training, and in living-wage jobs in growth sectors including care work and renewable energy. Those building blocks must include supports for care for family members, and maintaining robust consumer, labor, and equal rights protections carried out by federal workers.

America is facing an affordability crisis, due to low wages and high costs. But instead of tackling these real problems with effective solutions, the false narrative that drastic federal budget cuts can be easily made and would spur economic growth has returned to the public discourse. Unelected billionaires given the task of recommending budget reductions casually assert that \$2 trillion can be cut out of expenditures that totaled [\\$6.75 trillion in 2024](#). About half of those expenses were for Social Security, Medicare, and other health programs – programs for which there is strong bipartisan support. The billionaires would slash the federal workforce, not recognizing that eliminating all on-payroll federal civilian workers would reduce federal spending by [less than 5%](#).

While cutting one-third of the annual federal budget is viewed by most as laughably unrealistic, trillions of dollars in cuts even over a ten-year period would deprive people of needed services and protections and would be likely to damage the economy. An [earlier proposal](#) for a similarly high level of budget cuts was seen as likely to result in reduced GDP and hundreds of thousands of lost jobs.

Instead of economic contraction, Americans need help that federal investments can provide. For many Americans, the cost of meeting basic needs has risen painfully, leaving families less secure. Investments made during the pandemic to ensure that people had enough income and food, protection from eviction, and affordable health care were enormously helpful, but most of this help was allowed to expire. We have learned that despite low unemployment, millions earn too little to keep up with rising food, housing, health care, child care, and energy prices. Federal investments

commensurate with need could increase housing supply, improve access to education and training, expand the supply and affordability of care, and increase renewable energy, which would result in lower costs for basic needs and/or greater access to better-paying jobs. And yet, because of years of spending caps, domestic appropriations outside of veterans' health care **declined** by 4 percent from 2010-2023, taking inflation into account.

In 2023, close to one-third of all U.S. households had less than \$50,000 in income. Of renter households with incomes this low, nearly half ([47 percent](#)) were paying at least half their income on rent. Looking at renter households of all income levels, fully one-quarter pay half or more of their income on rent. Homeownership is down from peak levels of 69 percent in 2004 to 65.6 percent in the third quarter of 2024. The need to lower housing costs should be seen as an urgent federal budget priority. In another example of the high cost of necessities, working families with children need help with greater access to affordable, quality child care. There are areas of progress: the Affordable Care Act has resulted in fewer uninsured. From 2013 to 2023, the [uninsured rate declined](#) from 13.3 percent to 8 percent. We have also begun progress in reducing costs, for health insurance and prescription drugs; we must protect that progress and build upon it. For these and other basic expenditures like food and home energy costs, the federal budget can provide solutions.

Protecting and improving federal programs that ensure economic security and well-being for individuals and families and boost upward mobility to help people enter and remain in the middle class are the central goals of the Coalition on Human Needs. Decisions about federal investments should begin with an assessment of unmet needs. The President's budget, Congressional Budget Resolutions, and subsequent appropriations bills should all provide for real growth in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and realize the goal of reducing poverty and increasing economic security for all Americans. Meeting these goals requires budget decision-making informed by a commitment to address racial, ethnic, and gender disparities and injustices. Shared economic progress and the challenges of providing health care for all and ensuring retirement security for an aging population can be met by federally-funded investments that spur broadly shared economic growth, paid for by a responsible combination of revenues, savings, and sustainable levels of borrowing.

Failure to control wasteful spending makes it harder to meet our country's needs. The Pentagon and Homeland Security budgets should be subject to the same oversight and discipline as other spending. The Pentagon's budget is at an all-time high, and it exceeds the combined defense budgets of the next eight countries with highest defense spending: China, Russia, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ukraine, France, and Japan. Yet the Pentagon is the only federal agency that has never passed a

basic financial audit. Powerful special interests -- and the members they influence in Congress – must not be allowed to continue to fund programs and weapon systems that even the Pentagon’s military leadership has not requested and does not need. Similarly, funds for expanded border walls, harsh new programs aimed at harming hard-working immigrants, and inappropriately long prison sentences for non-violent drug-related offenses do not enhance our security.

It was a major step forward for Congress to have allowed Medicare to start negotiating drug prices and to have capped insulin prices for Medicare patients. The number of drugs subject to price negotiations should be increased, and people outside the Medicare program should also benefit from reduced drug prices. Congress and the executive branch should strengthen oversight of pharmaceutical companies, which now receive substantial government assistance in the form of publicly funded basic research and tax breaks, while continuing to charge exorbitant prices for medications.

Corporate tax expenditures, excessive payments to subsidize large corporations, and inadequate oversight of federal contracting are areas most likely to result in wasteful spending, as are failures to collect taxes owed by corporations and wealthy individuals. Reducing wasteful and ineffective spending will free up much needed revenue for human needs priorities and lead to improved national and economic security for our nation.

Administrative Attacks to Appropriated Funds, Regulation Efforts and Federal Personnel:

It is clear that the Trump Administration presents a new and significant risk to our communities’ efforts to ensure vulnerable people and communities get the valuable resources and the protections they need to thrive. The Trump Administration has already aggressively moved to freeze federal funds appropriated by Congress on programs that the Administration does not support. Such an unprecedented attack on basic Separation of Powers issues is a clear and dangerous threat. We fully expect that the Administration will continue to impound funding distribution in areas in the future. CHN plays a vital role in collaborating vigorous opposition to such attacks and to organize people across the country to fight back.

Likewise, a key goal of the new Administration is to significantly reduce the federal workforce, forcing federal workers charged with executing the will of Congress both related to spending priorities and the creation of regulation to risk an immediate loss of job security. Hollowing out expertise and a workforce is another way to attack program viability. A vibrant, educated federal workforce with deep expertise and experience is vital to ensuring government works daily in the best interest of the country. CHN stands ready to shine a light on these attacks and to provide key information to constituents all across the country in opposition to these attacks.

Finally, a core objective of the Trump Administration is to gut federal regulatory protections. These are some of the hardest threats for people to be aware of - even though critical - because regulations are often complex. CHN is once again committed to shining a light on these efforts, working with experts across the human needs communities, and using our communication capacity to inform people all around the country so that we can mobilize for action to oppose repeal or restrictions on regulations that serve to protect low- and moderate-income people's health, safety, and rights.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports a federal budget that gives priority to human needs, recognizing that investments are needed in our human and physical infrastructure such as education and job training, health care and nutrition, child care, housing, digital communications, clean air and water, and transportation, in order to boost our economy and increase opportunity and security for all people, with special attention to the needs of those with low- and moderate income. To help the nation recover from recent high inflation, it is necessary to continue to support and expand many services to meet growing needs. Investments in services should both meet needs and increase employment in good-paying jobs. The nation needs more care workers serving children, people with disabilities and older adults; more workers upgrading physical and digital infrastructure; more educators, specifically in public schools where 90% of children receive an education; more health professionals; and more workers in renewable energy and environmental cleanup. The federal budget should accommodate new and expanded effective federal programs as a strategy for economic growth and job creation to alleviate poverty and improve public health, ease the climb to the middle class, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities. Investments to achieve these ends should be exempt from efforts to reduce the deficit by cutting spending.

CHN supports a long-range balanced approach of investments to spur equitable economic growth and use of increased revenues from those most able to pay to prevent unsustainable deficits. The nation needs more investment in essential services and infrastructure in order to increase the number of good-paying jobs; without that, wages and economic growth will continue to stagnate, and prosperity will not be shared with millions of Americans, including families with children. Budgets should incorporate the goal of stabilizing the debt to GDP ratio over time, taking into account the impact of deficit reduction measures on disparate income groups and protecting low-income people from harmful cuts in services.

CHN supports increased investments in domestic discretionary spending based on current or anticipated needs through timely congressional approval of full-year appropriations bills, without extraneous policy riders, and **opposes** caps on discretionary spending, including those set as a proportion of GDP. **CHN opposes** further extensions of budget caps on non-exempt mandatory programs such as Medicare.

CHN opposes politicization of the federal workforce along with restrictive guidelines for program implementation that undermine the ability of federal policies to address human needs.

CHN opposes efforts on behalf of the Executive branch to withhold congressionally-approved spending. The Constitution grants the power of the purse to Congress. Congress, in response to abusive efforts to impound by President Nixon, enacted the Impoundment Control Act of 1974. Attempts to assert executive authority to impound congressionally approved funds would be an illegal abuse of power, and have been rejected by the Supreme Court, the Department of Justice within Republican Administrations, and the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

CHN opposes dramatic reductions in the federal workforce. Hollowing out expertise and staff who implement policy and disburse funding is another way to attack program viability. A vibrant, educated federal workforce with deep expertise and experience is vital to ensuring government works daily in the best interest of the country.

CHN supports improvements and expansions in mandatory programs such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), the Affordable Care Act, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child nutrition services, unemployment insurance, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), and child welfare and family support programs. These programs provide essential services, with special attention to the needs of people with low incomes, including children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

CHN opposes the conversion of mandatory programs such as the ones listed above to capped, restricted, or block-granted versions, leaving such essential programs unable to respond to growing need during economic downturns or disaster conditions.

CHN supports improvements to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which has provided health insurance to 45 million Americans and improved coverage for millions more. Enhanced premium tax credits saved the average marketplace enrollee over \$700 a year, while the ACA has made savings in overall health care costs that have already contributed to a reduction in long-range deficit trends. This includes adopting measures that build on the ACA's success and expand access to health care and reduce costs. **CHN supports** maintaining the enhanced premium tax credit for ACA marketplace insurance, which will expire in 2025 without Congressional action to extend it. **CHN opposes** efforts to sabotage, dismantle, or undermine the ACA.

CHN supports an even-handed and open assessment of expenditures and revenues through the budget process based on program effectiveness at meeting important goals. Tax expenditures, which totaled about \$1.8 trillion in 2023, must be subject to this assessment, along with Pentagon and domestic expenditures. Spending through the tax code is not only costly but also skewed to deliver its benefits disproportionately to people with the highest incomes. Overall, policymakers should reduce wasteful spending through strategies such as reducing or ending tax expenditures benefiting the wealthy and profitable corporations, expanding drug price negotiations, limiting detention and incarceration, and reducing excessive payments for corporate military or other contractors. Support for reducing military spending and increased transparency has increased across the political spectrum. Other expenditures such as anti-immigrant measures, agricultural subsidies and private contractor payments should be assessed for their usefulness in promoting national goals and for their impact on racial, ethnic, and other equity concerns. Similarly, tax expenditures intended to encourage economic growth should be evaluated for their cost-effectiveness and role in lessening or exacerbating inequality. *(See next section for a fuller discussion of CHN positions on revenues.)*

CHN supports efforts to rein in fraud and waste in the Pentagon budget such as by ensuring the Pentagon passes an audit and eliminating procedures that circumvent the regular budget process, providing funding beyond the requests from the Department of Defense, such as the unfunded priority lists.

CHN supports the continued incorporation of inflation adjustments in projecting baseline costs for programs in order to show the cost of maintaining current service levels. Failure to do so would create the false impression that flat funding would cover the same amount of services as in the previous year and would worsen current trends of disinvestment in domestic needs.

CHN supports budget rules that allow increases in mandatory program spending to be offset either by revenue increases or other spending reductions, and that require tax reductions to be paid for by other revenue increases. **CHN opposes** budget rules that would prohibit the use of increased revenues as an offset to pay for increases in mandatory program funding. **CHN opposes** budget rules that require a supermajority to increase tax revenues while allowing tax reductions with no required offset. **CHN opposes** applying pay-go rules to emergency spending for disaster relief or in response to economic downturns; nor should pay-go be applied to discretionary spending.

CHN supports either eliminating the debt limit or automatic approval by Congress of an increase or suspension of the level of debt held by the U.S. government. Once Congress has approved levels of spending and revenues that result in a deficit, there should be no separate periodic votes required to increase the debt limit. **CHN opposes** requiring cuts in spending as a condition of raising or suspending the debt limit. CHN agrees with the [GAO](#) that “The current debt limit process creates an unnecessary risk of U.S. default, which could have significant and, under certain conditions, devastating consequences for individuals, financial institutions, and the economy.”

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes restrictive structural changes such as block grants, per capita caps or vouchers, as well as dollar cuts in critical human needs programs that would hamper their effectiveness or their ability to serve eligible families and individuals in essential entitlement programs including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), SNAP, unemployment insurance, TANF, and SSI. **CHN opposes** administrative waivers that would undermine the individual entitlement to benefits. **CHN opposes** waiver policies that encourage states to impose work reporting requirements, cost sharing, privatization, and other measures intended to deny benefits, in contradiction of the basic purpose of programs, and **supports** ensuring that waiver requests from states are only approved if they are consistent with underlying law and accompanied by effective evaluation. **CHN opposes** offsetting cuts in one priority program to pay for another.

CHN opposes funding government operations such as the criminal justice or immigration systems by fees and fines that disproportionately harm people with low incomes.

CHN opposes the use of automatic measures resulting in funding cuts triggered by eventualities such as failure of Congress to enact appropriations bills or deficits higher than initial projections. Examples of such trigger proposals include the

automatic imposition of a Continuing Resolution to flat-fund appropriated programs when Congress fails to agree on annual spending bills, or requiring expedited reconciliation procedures in the Senate intended to force cuts or restrictions in basic safety net programs if deficits exceed estimates in the budget resolution. These or other automatic actions would have very negative effects if they were imposed during an economic downturn, when higher deficits are appropriate economic policy. Similarly, **CHN opposes** fast-track procedures for terminating programs or converting safety net entitlement programs to discretionary appropriations. The outcome of automatic or fast-tracking proposals is almost always the reduction of needed services. Congress should not substitute government by automatic pilot for the judgment members should exercise in weighing needs, sound economic policy, and revenue resources.

CHN opposes budget enforcement procedures that are limited to across-the-board spending cuts without requiring revenue increases and/or reductions in tax expenditures. **CHN opposes** the use of “dynamic scoring” to justify costly tax cuts. Economists across the ideological spectrum agree that its use is more a political tool than a reasoned assessment of policy.

CHN opposes constitutional amendments to require a balanced federal budget.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Tax Policy and the Economy

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes famously defined taxes as “what we pay for civilized society.” Over the past several decades, our tax system has become rigged in favor of the wealthy and corporations, while leaving average people and our children picking up the tab. Enacting spending cuts rather than raising revenues would be devastating to vital domestic priorities including human needs programs. We need a tax system that raises adequate revenues in a progressive manner and includes tax benefits that help struggling families.

The major tax bill passed in December 2017, with many provisions up for renewal in 2025, exacerbates the problem. Tax breaks and loopholes, and offshoring of profits all serve to benefit the super-rich, Wall Street, and major corporations while starving our country of the revenue needed to make critical public investments to protect the most vulnerable in our society and ensure opportunity for everyone.

Millionaires and billionaires saw their wealth balloon over the last decade, while the 2017 tax bill gave even more tax breaks to these wealthiest Americans.

We need a tax system that is built on the principles of fairness and adequacy. This means a system that is more progressive and raises a substantial amount of additional revenue from our country’s wealthiest individuals and corporations. For example, in 2022 Congress enacted a minimum corporate tax to shut down the most extreme tax avoidance by the very largest corporations and increased funding for the IRS, mainly so that the agency could raise more revenue by enforcing tax laws that have been ignored by corporations and the wealthiest individuals.

It also means providing assistance to those who need it, and Congress may implement such assistance through the tax code. For example, the expanded Child Tax Credit, implemented by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, lifted 5.3 million people out of poverty that year. Unfortunately, Congress failed to extend the expanded Child Tax Credit into 2022. Congress should improve the Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit to expand opportunity to those in need and help more individuals and families with low incomes out of poverty.

It also means striving to close racial and gender wealth gaps. For example, because corporate tax avoidance mainly benefits shareholders, who are disproportionately white, the corporate minimum tax will make some progress in reducing racial inequity caused by our tax code. Adequate funding for the IRS is also critical. As a result of budget cuts over the previous decade, audits of high-income taxpayers, which require substantial resources because of these filers' complex financial affairs, plummeted. The audit rate for millionaires dropped by 71 percent between 2010 and 2019. Prior to the infusion of resources under the Inflation Reduction Act, the agency had fewer auditors who handle the sophisticated tax returns of high-income households and corporations than it had in the early 1950s. The IRS focused instead on the simpler returns of low-income taxpayers, who are, due to systemic racism, disproportionately households of color. After the IRS budget cuts, EITC filers became about as likely to be audited as someone in the top 1 percent. Another example is the limits on the refundable part of the Child Tax Credit, which disproportionately harm children of color and were briefly eliminated as part of the 2021 expansion.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports a tax system that raises adequate revenues in a progressive manner and includes tax benefits that help struggling families.

CHN supports broadly reversing those provisions of the so-called Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) that favor the wealthy and corporations. This includes, but is not limited to, the cut in the top marginal tax rate for corporations and individuals, the doubling of the exemption for the estate tax, and the tax break for pass-through businesses. The TCJA further rigged our tax code in favor of the powerful at the expense of everyone else. While many of these provisions should be more broadly reformed, others should simply be repealed outright.

CHN supports substantially increasing the scale and scope of tax credits for low- and middle-income families. The success of programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) show that these programs are well worth building up and replicating to address additional needs in the future.

CHN supports closing the gap in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) so that no low-wage worker is taxed into poverty. Congress should expand the EITC for low-wage workers not raising children in their home, including extending the credit to young workers starting at age 19, to young adults who age out of foster care at 18, and to workers above the age of 64. **CHN supports** extending permanent, equal access to the federal EITC to residents of Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories, replacing Puerto Rico's more limited local EITC.

CHN supports strengthening the Child Tax Credit (CTC) for children living in poverty by increasing the amount, making the credit fully refundable with no earnings requirement, and with a higher amount provided for children under age six.

CHN supports strengthening the Child Tax Credit (CTC) for children living in poverty by increasing the amount, making the credit fully refundable with no earnings requirement, and with a higher amount provided for children under age six. **CHN supports** making the CTC available through advance monthly payments and making the credit available to children with Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITINs). **CHN supports** extending permanent, equal access to the federal CTC to residents of Puerto Rico and the other U.S. territories. The CTC is aimed at helping parents do the best for their children by creating a child allowance; under the current structure very poor families who most need it get only a partial credit or none at all.

CHN supports funding for the IRS, including the agency's annual base funding and mandatory funding provided to the IRS by the Inflation Reduction Act. **CHN opposes** any additional rescissions of IRS funding. **CHN supports** efforts to effectively track and redress racial disparities in auditing.

CHN supports ending the offset of refunds from the EITC, CTC, and other tax assistance intended to alleviate poverty for repayment of federal debts.

CHN supports legislation for the United States to implement the international corporate minimum tax negotiated by the Biden administration and the OECD, and other similar tax reforms that target corporate tax avoidance, reduce incentives for corporations to shift jobs and profits offshore, and crack down on tax havens. Multinational corporations should not be allowed to avoid paying their fair share in taxes by continuing to shift hundreds of billions in profits into tax havens each year.

CHN supports reducing tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, who receive billions in tax benefits each year that do not serve the national interest, increase inequality, and starve the government of revenues needed for important services. As written, many of the largest tax breaks in our code are upside-down, meaning they provide greater benefits to the wealthy over low- and middle-income families. Those tax breaks targeting real needs should be reformed and turned right-side up so that they are better targeted to those facing hardship. Well-targeted refundable credits for low- and moderate-income people are strongly preferable to deductions, which always benefit those in higher tax brackets more.

CHN supports taxing income from investments (such as capital gains and dividend income) at the same rate as income from work (ordinary income). There is no reason why wealthy investors like Warren Buffett should pay a lower tax rate than many middle-income Americans.

CHN supports reforms that would for the first time tax capital gains on assets held by extremely wealthy individuals annually, regardless of whether or not they are sold. Economists consider this asset appreciation to be income, but it is exempt from the income tax under current law.

CHN supports progressive new sources of revenue, such as financial transaction taxes on Wall Street trading, which would reduce the risk of and offset the costs related to firms that might be considered “too big to fail.”

CHN supports a significantly more progressive estate tax. The estate tax should be restored to its role as a critical bulwark against the increasing consolidation of wealth in the United States.

CHN supports repealing the loophole that allows a substantial portion of capital gains income to never be taxed if it is passed on as part of an estate. This is yet another way wealthy investors are able to escape taxation.

CHN supports enacting a carbon tax to combat the existential threat of climate change. The carbon tax should be carefully designed so that some of the revenue generated is returned to low- and middle-income families to offset increased costs for the tax.

CHN supports the establishment of a tax credit to help make housing affordable for renters with the lowest incomes. Our nation has long provided tax relief for higher income homeowners, most of whom would be stably housed without assistance. A renters’ tax credit that could help ensure that the lowest income households are able to afford a safe, decent home is long overdue.

CHN supports an expansion of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit tied to reforms that make it more effective and more able to serve more low-income and extremely low-income, homeless, rural, and Native American populations.

CHN supports making the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) refundable. This crucial reform would allow many low-income families to claim the credit for the first time, though it must be paired with robust direct investments in the child care system. Child care is a major expense for families and consumes a larger share of the budgets of families with lower incomes. The current CDCTC provides limited benefits to low-income families because it is not refundable.

CHN supports full funding of the IRS, including the agency’s annual base funding and mandatory funding provided to the IRS by the Inflation Reduction Act, so that the agency has adequate funding to better provide customer service to taxpayers as well as to strengthen and increase enforcement activities, especially focusing on taxpayers or corporations avoiding or evading large dollar amounts. CHN opposes any additional rescissions of IRS funding.

CHN supports investments in and continuation of programs that help taxpayers file their taxes for free and every tax credit to which they are entitled. **CHN supports** maintenance and expansion of the IRS' Direct File program. **CHN supports** increased funding for the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA).

CHN supports efforts to effectively track and redress racial disparities in auditing.

CHN supports repealing the requirement for the IRS to use private debt collectors and ending the disproportionate targeting of low-income taxpayers for collection activities.

CHN supports requiring regulation of commercial tax preparers including minimum competency standards. Financial products (refund anticipation loans and checks) offered by commercial preparers should be strictly regulated, including capping fees to 36%.

CHN supports Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) eligibility for tax credits designed to help families work, support their children and pay for college. Congress and the IRS must eliminate administrative barriers to applying for and receiving an ITIN in order to ensure that all taxpayers – regardless of their immigration status – are able to comply with their federal tax obligations.

CHN supports improving and retargeting tax incentives and other measures to promote asset building for low-income families with children, for retirement security and to reduce the racial wealth gap.

CHN supports review of regulations issued by the Trump Treasury Department that expanded the 2017 tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations beyond what the law allows. The Biden administration should consider revising these regulations to more closely follow the law and stop providing additional breaks that were not authorized by Congress.

CHN supports executive action to clarify that certain tax avoidance schemes run afoul of the law. Wealthy individuals and large corporations have creative attorneys and accountants who will continually push new tax dodging techniques to determine just how far they can go before the IRS reins them in the way the Obama administration reined in corporate inversions with new regulations.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes cutting funding for human needs programs to pay for any tax expenditures, including refundable tax credits such as EITC and CTC. Given the challenges many face in America, there is no reason additional help for some individuals should have to come at the cost of cuts for others in need.

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COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

CHN Supportive Issues

Issues in this category are those in which CHN will serve to “bridge” the gap between the human needs community and any other coalitions working on the identified issues. The Coalition will not take the lead on these issues but will support other leaders and expand their advocacy capacity. As resources permit, CHN will:

- Advocate on behalf of these issues before Congress and the Administration;
- Disseminate sign-on letters generated by other organizations to CHN member groups;
- Co-host briefings and forums on supportive issues;
- Identify member organizations to participate in advocacy efforts, but will not take primary responsibility for arranging meetings or actions on the issue;
- Track the legislation in The Human Needs Report; and
- Provide updates during regular advocates’ meetings.

The following public policy initiatives are identified as **Supportive Issues**:

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Poverty Reduction, Economic Security, and Creating Opportunity

We have a right to expect that our federal government will ensure opportunity and security for all. The power of the federal government to achieve huge reductions in poverty was demonstrated conclusively by the expansion of the Child Tax Credit (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. By increasing the size of the CTC to \$3,000 per child aged 6-17 and \$3,600 for children younger than 6, making it fully available for families with no earnings, and providing half in monthly installments, child poverty was nearly cut in half. Despite this historic reduction, Congress did not enact a continuation of the expanded benefit. Shortly after families stopped receiving monthly CTC payments, child poverty shot back up. The CTC is not fully available to families with the lowest incomes; families with earnings of less than \$2,500 are not eligible at all. In all, 17 million children will get less than the current full amount (\$2,000 per child) or nothing at all. These are very disproportionately children of color: 45 percent of Black children, 39 percent of Latino children, and 38 percent of AIAN children will get less than the full CTC or nothing at all. (For White and Asian children, those getting less than the full credit are 17 percent and 16 percent, respectively.) The giant step backward caused by not continuing the expanded CTC is once again widening poverty disparities by race. Further, the American Rescue Plan's increase in the EITC for people without dependent children and expanding eligibility to 19-24 year olds and those ages 65 and older prevented extremely low-income workers from being taxed further into poverty. That too was allowed to expire. Both failures showed clearly that poverty is a policy choice, not an inevitability.

During the Great Recession and its long aftermath, high unemployment caused millions to need unemployment insurance (UI) benefits, an infusion of cash that reduced family hardship and helped the economy to rebuild. But states and the federal government had cut back on the months of unemployment insurance and allowed states' UI funds to decline. During the pandemic's severe economic dislocation, expanded federal unemployment benefits provided a lifeline for tens of millions of workers, but those benefits expired abruptly, and states have again cut back on benefits. We need robust unemployment benefits in good times and bad, which cover all workers, including those working part-time and in the gig economy. And we need federal assistance and required state performance to ensure state unemployment systems are modernized and up to the task of helping jobless Americans. Unemployment levels may rise as Federal Reserve efforts to curb inflation take hold; state UI systems must be ready to respond.

Deeply rooted discrimination across systems and structures means that certain groups are disproportionately likely to experience poverty, and there should be a national commitment to overcome these disparities. Communities of color are poor at more than twice the rate of non-Hispanic whites, requiring an intentional approach to developing policy solutions needed by people of color. Young children experience high rates of poverty at a time when they are undergoing critical stages of development. People with disabilities are poor at about twice the total poverty rate, and integrating income, health, transportation and other supports will be critical to addressing these disparities. LGBTQ people collectively have a much higher poverty rate than the rate for cisgender straight people, with transgender people and bisexual cisgender women experiencing especially high rates of poverty. People living at the intersection of racial, disability, and sexual orientation/gender identity statuses have statistically significant higher poverty rates.

Concentrated poverty exists in certain urban and rural areas. Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories and tribal lands are also areas of extremely disproportionate poverty. Many discriminatory practices exacerbate poverty in the territories, including limited access to benefits available to other citizens living in states. High-poverty areas require a comprehensive approach to job creation and community development through rebuilding infrastructure, transportation, and affordable housing, combined with improved and stabilized education, access to broadband, job training, child care, and health care. Youth and young adults must be provided opportunities to attain postsecondary education, including through apprenticeships and other forms of on-the-job training, as well as access to social services, health care, and affordable housing. Recently enacted federal investments in infrastructure and climate change mitigation should be historic opportunities to rebuild poor communities, with opportunities for people from those communities to get jobs.

Families living in poverty, especially single-parent families, need cash assistance and comprehensive supports to prevent privation and to allow parents to raise their children with the resources they need to thrive and succeed. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program should be a more effective part of that package, providing income assistance that is aligned with costs of living while connecting families to job training and/or education that leads to living wage employment, child care, and other needed services. Due to the block grant structure of TANF, as well as the strict program requirements, TANF has been less effective at supporting families during emergencies, like recessions or public health crises.

Social Security insures nearly all American workers and their families in the event of a worker's retirement, death, or qualifying disability. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) provides a basic standard of living for very low-income seniors and people with

disabilities. Social Security and SSI together lift more people out of poverty than any other system but need to be strengthened through broadened eligibility and increased benefits. Even before the onset of the pandemic, overall retirement security was declining, as employer-sponsored defined benefit pensions continued to decline, and stagnant or lost wages, high levels of debt, and reduced home equity sapped Americans' ability to save for retirement through employer-sponsored defined contribution plans or Individual Retirement Accounts. And too many families live on a very thin financial margin, with little or no ability to get by if workers lose their jobs, die, or experience a life-changing disability. SSI benefits, earned income disregards, and asset limits have not kept up with the rising costs of living, resulting in SSI recipients not being allowed to achieve financial stability. Individuals receiving SSI are only allowed to have up to \$2,000 in assets before reaching the program asset limit. The asset limit is only \$3,000 for married couples. Strengthening Social Security and SSI will enhance the economic security of seniors, people with disabilities, and families.

To help fight poverty, we also need accurate, rigorous means of measuring economic security and hardship. This means providing adequate funding for the U.S. Census Bureau, enabling it to conduct accurate decennial censuses and to collect annual local and state data with improved accuracy in capturing race, ethnic and gender identification, through the American Community Survey and Current Population Survey, as well as other important research tools such as the Supplemental Poverty Measure, Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), and other surveys.

Measuring Economic Security and Hardship

The Coalition on Human Needs supports enhancing data on young children, including improving the quality of data on young children in the decennial census, which has substantially undercounted young children, and in annual population estimates derived from these data.

CHN supports adequate funding for the Census Bureau (including for important surveys on economic security and hardship such as the Household Trends and Outlook Pulse Survey and Survey of Income and Program Participation) and for the presently underfunded Bureau of Labor Statistics. **CHN supports** additional funding to modernize surveys to address growing problems such as non-response.

CHN supports including questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in surveys and record systems in consultation with federal statistical experts and external stakeholders working to address the needs of overlooked communities.

CHN supports the expeditious implementation of the Office of Management and Budget’s revisions to 2024 Statistical Policy Directive 15 for reporting race in combination with Hispanic origin, including a category for people with origins in the Middle East or North Africa, and mandatory detailed data (disaggregated data) across all federal agencies, including in administrative records datasets, including the 2030 Census.

CHN supports careful analysis of the accuracy of the 2020 Census, with special attention to better understanding the undercounts of children, communities of color, immigrants, and low-income communities. Efforts should be made to derive and apply lessons from the 2020 Census to mitigate or eliminate any such undercounts in 2030 and to ensure that funding distributions intended to serve low-income communities are not jeopardized by inaccurate census data.

CHN supports the development of one or more official measures of the income needed to reach a decent living standard that provides for the maintenance of health and social well-being, children’s care and development, and social participation, and that is substantially above both the supplemental poverty line and the outmoded official poverty line.

These measures should be designed with input from Congress and the public, including those with lived experiences of financial hardship, and guidance from the National Academy of Sciences Committee on National Statistics. Any new measure should be tied to 21st-century living standards in line with measures used in other wealthy countries. Moreover, any effort to account for geographic variations in the cost of living should account for child care, housing, utility, and transportation costs.

CHN supports monthly or quarterly updating of poverty statistics in order to better track the changing needs of families and individuals.

CHN opposes political interference in the inherently apolitical work of statistical agencies.

CHN opposes asking about citizenship status on the decennial census questionnaire given that this question would lead to a decrease in response rates and accuracy.

Reducing Poverty for Children and Families

All children deserve to live happy, fulfilling lives. This means that all children should have their immediate health and safety needs met, and no child should be denied the chance for a bright future based on their family’s hardship.

We are failing our nation's children in this regard. The [U.S. Census Bureau reports](#) that nearly 14% of children (nearly 10 million) in the United States lived in households with incomes below the poverty threshold in 2023 (\$37,482 for a family of four with two children). This represents a 10% increase in child poverty from 2022, resulting in almost one million more children experiencing poverty in a year.

This is not a small problem — the number of kids experiencing poverty is greater than the population of 11 individual states. Millions of children in our country lack access to sufficient food, stable housing, clean diapers, and other resources that they need to nourish their developing brains and bodies. According to the National Diaper Bank Network, one in two US families struggle to afford diapers for their children. Not having diapers impacts the physical, emotional and economic well-being of children and families, leading to increased medical costs, lack of access to child care, and lost wages. The hardships brought by poverty not only have repercussions for the children impacted but for our nation as a whole.

Our country's recent upward child poverty trend is unacceptable, especially when you consider that four years ago, amidst a global pandemic, we were able to enact policies that cut child poverty nearly in half.

Poverty, even for a short time, can have significant negative implications for children's development and future success. Poverty means less income in households for a plentiful amount of nutritious food, safe shelter, proper physical and mental healthcare, clean diapers, education materials, and more that is critical to a child's healthy development. Poverty also means increased stress for parents and caretakers, reducing their mental and emotional bandwidth for their children as they struggle to try to make ends meet for their household.

Poverty is linked to [worse physical health outcomes for children](#), including chronic diseases such as asthma. Children living in poverty are at higher risk of experiencing food insecurity, [which negatively impacts their growth and development](#). This contributes to a [lack of school readiness](#), and poor children obtain [lower levels of educational attainment and earn less as adults](#) when compared to their non-poor peers. [The duration of poverty matters](#) for children — the longer a child experiences poverty, the greater the likelihood they will experience poverty as an adult.

Poor families with children are more likely to come into contact with the child welfare system. This is often because reporters of child maltreatment too often conflate poverty with neglect due to misunderstanding or bias, and therefore report neglect when the real issue is poverty and a lack of household resources. Child Trends reports that [nearly half of states do not specifically exempt poverty-induced deprivation from their definitions of child maltreatment](#), which makes children from poor families in these states more susceptible to being reported, investigated, and substantiated for child neglect.

Poverty doesn't just have negative implications for individual children, but for our society as a whole, costing our country [upwards of \\$1 trillion a year](#) in lost economic output.

A 2019 [non-partisan, landmark study from the National Academy of Sciences](#) confirms that the negative outcomes associated with child poverty directly result from a lack of income. When families receive cash assistance, it not only reduces child poverty but also improves children's short- and long-term health, educational, and economic outcomes, both by increasing access to resources that support children's healthy development as well as reducing household stress. Cash assistance has a two-generation effect in promoting economic mobility: In addition to supporting children, the assistance helps adults in the household afford child care, transportation to work, higher education, or job training programs that lead to steady employment and higher-paying jobs.

The outcomes from the 2021 expansions to the Child Tax Credit confirm these findings. [Numerous surveys found](#) that households with children reported using the payments to buy food, pay rent, cover childcare costs, and provide clothing, educational materials, and activities that enrich children's lives in the short and long term. Child poverty was nearly cut in half, and food insufficiency among families with children (households that reported that they sometimes or often do not have enough to eat) [decreased by over 25%](#). [Families reported that the payments gave them a sense of relief](#) from the constant worry of how to cover bills and keep their household afloat.

In order to make sustainable progress in reducing child poverty, we must:

- **Advance Racial Equity:** Significant racial and ethnic economic disparities persisted even with the progress made in 2021, and since the expiration of that progress the poverty gap has now widened between Black and Hispanic children compared to white children. [Children in immigrant families continue to face higher rates of poverty](#) than children in non-immigrant families due to racist and xenophobic laws that restrict their access to tax credits and other benefits. Children in Puerto Rico [face higher rates of poverty than children in the 50 states and the District of Columbia](#) due to their unequal access to federal benefits as part of a long history of racism and discrimination against Americans living in the territories.
- **Improve Poverty Measurement:** Thresholds used to measure poverty remain much too low and therefore underestimate how many children are experiencing material hardship and deprivation. In many areas of the country, [families with incomes significantly over poverty thresholds still struggle to cover household expenses](#). The Supplemental Poverty Measure also does not take [all household basic needs](#) into account. Finally, children in Puerto Rico and the other territories [are left out of most federal statistical products](#), including the reporting of national child poverty rates.

- **Build Political Will By Setting a National Child Poverty Reduction Target:** While we have the evidence as to what works to combat child poverty, our country has lacked the political will necessary to sustain lasting progress. Establishing a national child poverty reduction target in the United States would provide a tool to increase accountability and focus on child poverty reduction across the federal government.

Cash Assistance and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

The Coalition on Human Needs supports providing people with low incomes with cash assistance to use as they see fit to meet their basic needs and live with dignity.

CHN supports basic income programs and fully refundable tax credits.

CHN supports reforms to current savings and ownership limits in programs such as TANF, SSI, SNAP, and the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to encourage savings and asset-building for the future.

CHN supports reforms to the SSI program to make it better equipped to help recipients achieve financial stability and resilience, including increasing the SSI benefit to at least 100 percent of the federal poverty line, increasing the program asset limit, removing the in-kind support and maintenance provision penalties, increasing the earned income disregards, and removing marriage penalties.

CHN supports improvements to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to offer greater income supports to more low-income families and to avoid supplantation of other state spending or diversion of funding to services for people whose incomes are not low.

CHN supports measuring TANF's success by poverty reduction rather than caseload reduction.

CHN supports increasing TANF recipients' access to high-quality education and training without arbitrary time limits.

CHN supports changes to the TANF work participation rate (WPR) that give states credit for engaging clients in education and training and barrier removal activities, and that allow states to align TANF with workforce programs.

CHN supports suspending work reporting requirements and time limits and/or waiving penalties for states during times of economic crisis, natural disaster, or other crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

CHN supports additional funding for TANF cash assistance, emergency benefits, and subsidized jobs programs during times of economic distress.

CHN supports requiring all states to pass through all child support collected on behalf of households receiving TANF rather than reimbursing themselves and disregarding any income received through child support for the purposes of TANF eligibility.

CHN supports adding a definition of “needy families” to help target TANF spending towards families with the lowest incomes.

CHN supports restricting states’ ability to meet their maintenance of effort requirements through third-party spending.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes cuts to the TANF block grant or block granting of other key programs.

CHN opposes adding behavioral requirements for recipients to access cash assistance.

CHN opposes implementing stricter work requirements and time limits in the TANF cash assistance program.

CHN opposes TANF dollars being allocated toward crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs). States should invest TANF dollars toward families with very low incomes through cash assistance and child care rather than funding CPCs.

CHN opposes family caps, asset tests, and full-family sanctions which block or reduce benefits to families with children and deepen racial economic disparities;

Child Protection, Foster Care, Kinship Care and Adoption

CHN supports investing in children and youth and strengthening families as key poverty reduction strategies. These investments can help prevent intergenerational cycles of poverty by maximizing opportunities for success. This includes provision of critical mental health and substance use disorder services to both adults and youth.

CHN supports legislation that helps prevent child abuse and neglect and other family crises, strengthens supports for vulnerable children, youth and families at risk of entering the child welfare system, increases access to substance use disorder and mental health services and treatment for children and parents, promotes care in the most family-like settings, strengthens the capacity of the child welfare workforce to respond to the special needs of children and families, promotes permanency and post-permanency services and assists women experiencing domestic violence and their children who witness it.

CHN supports the reauthorization of and full funding for the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA).

CHN supports robust implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018, to expand access to prevention services and ensure children are placed in family-based settings whenever possible.

CHN supports engaging people with lived experience in the child welfare system in the policymaking process.

CHN supports policies that expand the availability of high-quality trauma-informed services for children who have experienced abuse or neglect.

CHN supports protections for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) children and families through robust implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act and policies that promote race equity in the child welfare system.

CHN supports policies that promote placing children with kin when possible and that provide the same level of support for kin caregivers as for non-kin foster families. CHN supports efforts to expand the Guardianship Assistance Program in all states.

CHN supports increased funding for recruitment, training, and retention of a diverse pool of foster parents, particularly those for special populations such as sibling groups, children and youth with special behavioral health needs, and adolescent and teen populations, and of foster parents or other specialized placements for victims of sex trafficking.

CHN supports policies that improve access to high-quality legal representation for children and families involved with the child welfare system. CHN supports increased funding for the Court Improvement Program.

CHN supports efforts to extend foster care through age 21 in all states and to increase funding for the John H. Chafee Foster Care Program for successful Transition to Adulthood, including increased funding for Education and Training Vouchers.

CHN supports full funding for the Violence Against Women Act, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services formula grants, and the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes the conversion of child welfare services and foster care entitlement funding into a state block grant.

CHN opposes discrimination in the recruitment and placement of adoptive and foster parents and any practices that would harm LGBTQIA+ youth and urges the Administration to repeal regulations and guidance that allowed such discrimination.

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Child Support Enforcement

The Coalition on Human Needs supports modernizing the child support system to better serve the income needs of children, parents, and non-custodial parents (NCPs).

CHN supports 100 percent pass-through of child support contributions to be paid directly to families and disregarded when determining TANF eligibility and benefit amounts, as opposed to the government keeping those contributions to repay itself. Child support debt already owed to governments should be directed to the children to whom it is due.

CHN supports eliminating cost recovery in TANF for state welfare programs and providing an avenue for states to help enact changes.

CHN supports ending the requirements that parents who are seeking TANF, Medicaid, SNAP or child care assistance cooperate with the state's establishment of child support enforcement.

CHN supports setting child support orders at levels realistic for NCPs to pay, and adjustable when circumstances change. **CHN supports** policies to forgive arrears that will never be paid and act as barriers to employment. **CHN supports** voluntary employment services for NCPs to enhance their ability to support their children.

CHN supports establishing a child support assurance program that provides a federally-funded minimum amount per month for children in households with child support orders.

CHN supports providing program flexibility during public health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, including suspending penalties for NCPs, and waiving current federal regulations regarding financial penalties.

CHN supports reform of federal policies for offsetting Social Security, Veterans' benefits, and other payments to NCPs in order to collect past-due support that is not paid to the custodial parent and that may deprive the NCP of funds needed for necessities.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes child support policies that are set without regard to ability to pay and that put NCPs at risk of ever-increasing arrears and incarceration, including states that use criminal or civil punishment enforcement measures. **CHN opposes** proposed rules or regulations to limit the right to adjust child support orders during periods of incarceration, which should be withdrawn or rescinded. **CHN opposes** requiring NCPs to pay support to the government when their children are placed in foster care, although support owed could be placed in trust for children in foster care.

Youth Policies

The Coalition on Human Needs supports an economy that uplifts all young people and abolishes structural barriers to economic opportunity. We support large-scale investments that expose youth and young adults to multiple fields and link them to employment and education pathways in careers of interest. A federal subsidized jobs program should offer summer and year-round employment, high quality pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs), connections to paid public and private sector internships, and other work-based learning opportunities targeted to young people of color and communities with high rates of poverty, youth unemployment, and disconnection from school.

CHN supports using the implementation of the Carl D. Perkins Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act as key opportunities to advance equity for students of color, and supports investments in multiple education options and pathways, including dropout recovery and reengagement strategies, that lead to the attainment of secondary, postsecondary, and meaningful industry credentials for young people. It is essential that the nation's public education system play a key role in the recovery of young people who do not have a secondary credential, including Opportunity Youth, and support those who are at imminent risk of not completing and/or being pushed out of school, including over-age and under-credited students.

CHN supports efforts to improve school climate and eliminate suspensions, expulsions and school-based arrests. These efforts include implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act, redirection of funding, and passage of school climate policies that divest from School Resource officers and law enforcement in schools at the federal level and invest instead in student wellbeing. Congress should fully implement the sections of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) that invest in culturally responsive and healing centered resources, build positive school climates, and eliminate school discipline disparities. School behavioral health workforces should include both clinical and non-clinical services, including but not limited to peer support specialists, mental health professionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, and other school personnel trained in positive youth development.

CHN supports the expansion of national service programs such as AmeriCorps, the National Civilian Community Corps, and VISTA and increasing member compensation so more youth and young adults with low incomes can serve their communities and gain valuable skills through these programs. **CHN supports** the continued funding for the national Civilian Climate Corps, which gives young people access to work in climate change mitigation and the green economy.

CHN supports canceling student debt through approaches that would target relief to people with low incomes, and reauthorizing the Higher Education Act (HEA), with an emphasis on policies, such as debt-free college, that prioritize students with low incomes, particularly students of color, first-generation college students, and student parents. **CHN supports** advancing access to high quality postsecondary education with policy provisions such as part-time and year-round Pell Grants (including restoring access to Pell Grants for students who are incarcerated), work-study reform, transition and wrap-around supports; and providing access to federal student aid for undocumented and DACAmented students. **CHN supports** enhancing protections to prevent for-profit schools from using predatory practices and to hold them accountable for harming students, and to provide relief to harmed students.

CHN supports the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and National Apprenticeship Act, including robust funding commensurate to the scale of need. These reauthorizations should strengthen provisions for serving priority populations such as Opportunity Youth and for mitigating employment consequences of contact with the criminal legal system. WIOA reauthorization should streamline eligibility requirements through self-attestation and ensure at least 75% of funds are targeted to priority populations such as Opportunity Youth.

CHN supports a comprehensive response to youth experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied youth. This includes a federal commitment to provide all youth in need with access to safe shelter and appropriate supportive services, including mental health support, transportation, child care, and guaranteed income.

CHN recognizes that youth mental health challenges are rooted in structural factors, namely poverty, racism and discrimination, and community violence. **CHN supports** federal action on youth mental health aligned with the following principles: redefining mental health to focus on wellness and prevention, expanding access to care, enhancing culturally responsive services, addressing social needs, strengthening quality infrastructure, and building a robust and diverse mental health workforce. **CHN supports** investments in youth mental health including a 10% set aside for prevention in the Mental Health Block Grant; strengthening Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) and expanding eligibility through age 26; Medicaid guidance specific to youth peer support that includes allowing people 16 and older to become youth peer support specialists, specifies the minimal level of required documentation to ensure peer support remains non-clinical, encourages peers to be supervised by fellow peers, and removes the coordinated care requirement to ensure peer support is a preventive service; **CHN supports** more youth mental health resources in more spaces including school, community, virtual, and any other spaces that are important to young people; ending systems, industries, and industrial

complexes that undermine healing and perpetuate stigma; and ending systemic racism and all forms of oppression in mental health systems. CHN supports access to gender affirming care and recognizes such care as a critical mental health support for trans and nonbinary young people. CHN supports police-free mobile response services and an end to all forced treatment policies.

CHN supports reforms that promote investments in prevention, early intervention and re-entry supports rather than costly incarceration. **CHN supports** efforts to eliminate correctional control and police violence directed at Black youth and other marginalized groups. **CHN supports** efforts to assist states and localities in removing youth from the adult criminal justice system; investing in community-based systems of care that incorporate trauma-informed approaches; and employment and postsecondary pathways, including expanding comprehensive programs to systems-impacted individuals through funding and legislation such as the Breathe Act. **CHN supports** robust reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act. **CHN supports** eliminating youth incarceration by investing \$100 million to close youth prisons; reinstating and updating key guidance that protects youth by eliminating fines and fees on youth and their families and caregivers, that guides states on ways to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and that protects LGBTQ/GNC youth and other vulnerable youth populations. *(See Reforming the Justice System recommendations.)*

Financial Security for Older Adults and People with Disabilities

The Coalition on Human Needs supports proposals that protect and expand Social Security benefits while ensuring the program's long-term solvency. This could include both across-the-board benefit increases and increases targeted to disadvantaged populations. Funding for the Social Security Trust Funds could be increased by raising or eliminating the cap on taxable income.

CHN supports proposals that improve access to income-support and other anti-poverty benefits for those in need. **CHN supports** efforts to reduce punitive and denigrating administrative burdens on beneficiaries across anti-poverty programs from application processes, to benefit provision, benefit maintenance activities such as eligibility recertification, and benefit termination.

CHN supports opportunities for beneficiaries to work up to their capacities while receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) payments without significant risk of harsh penalties from errors or overpayments due to confusing rules that might be particularly hard for people with disabilities to navigate. **CHN supports** the reinstatement of the student Social Security survivor benefit to assist young people who continue their education at college, university, or vocational school after high school.

CHN supports strengthening the basic standard of living provided by Supplemental Security Income (SSI) by increasing its currently sub-poverty level benefit. CHN supports increasing SSI's inadequate asset limits, ending marriage penalties, updating the program's earned and unearned income exclusions (which have been frozen since SSI's enactment), increasing income and substantial gainful activity (SGA) limits for all Social Security benefits by indexing them to inflation. ending eligibility time limits for or refugees and other humanitarian immigrants, and bringing eligibility rules for other lawfully-residing immigrants into parity with those that apply to citizens. **CHN supports** extending eligibility for SSI benefits to all residents of the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

CHN supports proposals to ensure that Social Security's cost of living adjustment (COLA) is improved to more accurately take into account health care and other costs of seniors and people with disabilities, so that their modest benefits do not continue to erode due to inflation, as they do under the current formula.

CHN supports the current structure of higher income Social Security beneficiaries paying income tax on part of their benefits. This taxation of benefits is broadly progressive, since people with low incomes (about half of all beneficiaries) pay nothing and the tax rate on benefits increases with income. The substantial proceeds from taxing Social Security benefits are credited to the trust fund, strengthening the program's financing.

CHN supports Congress and the Administration working together to increase administrative funding to the Social Security Administration (SSA) so it can provide high-quality and timely service to the American people. **CHN supports** adequate administrative budgets for SSA to meet the growing administrative burdens and to eliminate the backlogs facing SSA and state agencies responsible for disability determinations, allowing SSA to fulfill its responsibilities to the American people, including providing annual statements of contributions to the Social Security program, as required by law.

CHN supports ending the offset of Social Security payments and other income intended to alleviate poverty for repayment of federal debts, including student loan debt.

CHN supports policies that would strengthen defined benefit pensions for public and private employees, expand coverage for low-wage workers in other employer-based retirement plans, and provide effective incentives for personal savings and asset building by people with low incomes.

CHN supports permanently expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for adults not raising children in their home to workers age 65 and older.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes cutting already-modest Social Security benefits. **CHN opposes** all cuts, including raising the retirement age, means-testing the benefit or adopting a “chained” consumer price index that would over time result in massive reductions in benefits received by the elderly, veterans, and persons with disabilities.

CHN opposes proposals to develop recommendations for achieving solvency of the Social Security and Medicare trust funds by means which would circumvent a deliberative public process. Any procedure to devise recommendations for changes to the Social Security and Medicare programs should include public hearings and result in draft legislation that includes equitable revenue increases developed and voted on under the regular rules of order of the House and Senate.

CHN opposes eliminating income taxes on Social Security benefits, since only a portion of those benefits are taxed, the taxes are paid by higher-income beneficiaries who tend to have other sources of retirement income and wealth, and those taxes provide needed federal revenues.

CHN supports enacting national paid family and medical leave **but opposes** proposals that purport to provide paid leave through delaying or reducing future Social Security benefits. **CHN supports** enacting national paid sick leave as well.

CHN opposes cutting or privatizing Social Security or otherwise replacing some or all of Social Security benefits with private accounts, and opposes proposals that would cut or lessen the progressivity of the financial security provided by Social Security, including SSDI.

CHN opposes policies that force elderly and disabled refugees to lose their SSI or that confiscate the Social Security contributions of some workers, such as undocumented immigrants.

CHN opposes proposals that would lead to harmful cuts, caps, added work requirements and other administrative burdens, or changes to core anti-poverty programs such as Medicaid and SNAP, which will impact the financial security of older adults and people with disabilities. *(See related sections of this document for more details.)*

CHN opposes policies that undermine defined benefit pensions.

Job Creation and Employment

CHN supports federal aid to encourage states and localities to create jobs targeted to providing employment experience and opportunities for low-income workers and those who have exhausted unemployment benefits. Jobs in the public and private sectors can be created through initiatives similar to the successful but expired Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund, summer and year-round job placements for youth, and transitional jobs to help people with limited job experience and/or severe barriers to employment, such as people with criminal records, including those who have been formerly incarcerated.

CHN supports job creation strategies targeted to specific sectors in order to address unmet needs while providing employment opportunities for millions of workers. Care work is an important example. By investing in expanded capacity to provide quality child care and early childhood education, home and community based care for seniors and people with disabilities, nursing care, and public health workers who can provide services to increase vaccinations, substance use disorder treatment, preventive care, and assistance with access to health care in underserved communities, our nation can create jobs with good pay and benefits while providing services vitally needed in our communities. *(See also the [Caregiving](#) section.)* **CHN supports** a multi-year commitment to increase employment in all these areas, providing services in underserved rural and urban communities, and to territories and tribes. Such services should support home and community-based care for seniors and people with disabilities by investing in home safety and accessibility modifications. **CHN supports** a federal commitment to ensure that care services are affordable, through approaches such as subsidies, sliding scale cost-sharing, refundable tax credits, social insurance models, Medicaid and Medicare funding, or other models to assist families and individuals with low to moderate incomes. **CHN supports** affordable training opportunities to allow for career ladders within care work fields, with special focus on providing access to the full range of care work employment for people in low income communities and communities of color. Other sectors in addition to care work can provide job opportunities for workers, including jobs in renewable energy and/or environmental clean-up. *(See [Addressing Environmental and Climate Threats](#) section.)*

CHN supports expansion of AmeriCorps, summer, and year round employment programs and paid work experiences to create jobs and service opportunities for jobless young Americans. Temporary jobs programs should include strong anti-displacement protections to ensure that current workers do not lose their jobs or work hours due to these programs, and that no permanent positions are lost. Those placed in temporary subsidized positions should be paid the prevailing wage.

CHN supports enhanced funding for intensive and personalized reemployment services to link workers with education and training opportunities, to assist them in their job search, and to help employers find workers to fill job vacancies.

CHN supports robust work and training opportunities, including expanded apprenticeship programs, as well as robust labor exchange programs that connect unemployed and underemployed workers to high quality jobs.

CHN supports full implementation of the Section 3 Economic Opportunities for Low and Very Low Income Persons' obligation to provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low and very low-income residents.

CHN supports the expanded use of local hire provisions to ensure local workers and job seekers – especially those individuals with barriers to employment, such as people with low incomes, people of color, women, people impacted by the justice system, and others – get opportunities for quality employment opportunities in their communities.

CHN supports a strong safety net for those who are unable to find work, or who are poor even though they are working.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any attempts to weaken safety net programs through block granting or otherwise restricting federal investments for such programs, mandatory work requirements or arbitrary time limits on benefit receipt.

Community Services Block Grant

The Coalition on Human Needs supports increased funding for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), which provides Community Action Agencies (CAAs) with flexible funds to support their locally-driven, comprehensive approach to fighting poverty. According to the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families, CSBG funds housing, nutrition, utility, and transportation assistance; employment, education, and other income and asset building services; crisis and emergency services; and community asset building initiatives, among other things. CSBG delivers a high return on investment by empowering CAAs to leverage funding and foster innovative solutions that meet local needs and promote self-sufficiency. These funds enable CAAs to respond rapidly to urgent community challenges, such as natural disasters, while also supporting the creation of tailored solutions that build economic stability and resilience. CSBG is critical for maintaining the core administrative infrastructure needed for assessing community needs and coordinating programs and services to amplify impact. Over 9 million individuals are served by CSBG-funded programs annually.

Regulations, Waivers and Enforcement

The Coalition on Human Needs supports effective enforcement of laws that protect workers, consumers, and the environment, including adequate funding for enforcement agencies. **CHN supports** opportunities for wide public comment before regulatory changes, and meaningful agency engagement with the comments received.

CHN supports cross-agency federal efforts to integrate systems and share data while protecting privacy in order to develop client-centric systems that are coordinated and responsive to client needs regardless of funding source. **CHN supports** protections to ensure that data provided to benefit programs are not used for immigration enforcement or criminal prosecutions. **CHN supports** the use of program options to improve service delivery and program effectiveness.

CHN supports the collection and reporting of both financial and outcome data as part of the waiver process in order to improve our understanding of effective programs and the resources they deliver. **CHN supports** the use of disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, and age to understand the impact of policy or implementation on different groups. **CHN supports** the use of equity assessments as part of the waiver review process. **CHN supports** making the results of waiver evaluations public.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes efforts to overturn or sunset regulations as a block or automatically after they have been in effect for a certain period of time, or to put a moratorium on regulations regardless of their impact.

CHN opposes the use of waivers to bypass essential protections, including public administration necessary to protect the integrity of core functions, create new conditions of eligibility, or reduce benefits or services for low-income populations. **CHN supports** a fully transparent waiver review process, including standards for approval, limits on the duration for which a waiver can be approved, and a public comment process, including on amendments/extensions of waivers.

CHN opposes methods of assessing costs and benefits of regulations that overemphasize the costs of regulations that protect the public and minimize the benefits of such protections, including where the benefits are not quantitative or are difficult to measure.

CHN supports the use of the Paperwork Reduction Act to address the administrative burden of applying for and receiving benefits, including time, financial, and psychological costs.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Food and Nutrition

Hunger in America is recognized as the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to sufficient food due to poverty or constrained resources, which can lead to malnutrition over time. Families who experience hunger frequently skip meals or eat too little, sometimes going without food. Those who have access to some food often have lower quality diets or must resort to seeking emergency food because they cannot always afford the food they need. Research shows that young children in such food insecure households are more likely to suffer from ill health and developmental problems and are more likely to be hospitalized, while those who benefited from nutrition assistance during childhood experience better health and education outcomes and earnings as adults, as compared with similarly low-income children who did not receive nutrition assistance.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in 2023, 47.4 million lived in food insecure households (13.5 percent, which is a rise from 12.8 percent in 2022). The racial disparities are striking: 21.9 percent among Latino families, 23.3 percent among Black families, and only 9.9 percent among White families. Overall, people living with children were more likely to be going without food: 17.9 percent as compared to 11.9 percent for people without children.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) reaches key vulnerable populations — nearly 80 percent of SNAP households include a child, an elderly person, or a person with disabilities; 79 percent of all SNAP benefits go to such households. Most working-age SNAP recipients work, but simply earn too little to afford the food they need and earn “too much” to receive adequate SNAP benefits. Existing SNAP rules set harsh limits on assistance for adults without dependent children at home; they can only receive three months of benefits over three years unless they are working at least 20 hours per week, with only a few exceptions. Most of these extremely poor individuals are unable to secure enough work hours and do lose assistance unless the state seeks a waiver of the three-month limit - which can only be sought due to high local unemployment. Some proposals would make it more difficult for states to seek such waivers - Louisiana has banned them outright - and would also impose similar time limits on more adults receiving SNAP, although there is no evidence that setting such limits results in more work — just more food insecurity.

SNAP is one of the nation's most effective anti-poverty programs. SNAP lifted more than 6.6 million people out of poverty in 2023, according to the Census Bureau's Supplemental Poverty Measure. Time and again, SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs have proven to be effective tools in fighting hunger and poverty, as they were during the height of the pandemic.

Congress's bipartisan 2018 Farm Bill required USDA to review the Thrifty Food Plan (on which SNAP and other nutrition benefits are based) which resulted in modestly increased SNAP benefits. Before that increase or any of the temporary measures to add to SNAP benefits, the average benefit per person was only \$121/month, or \$4 per person per day. Even after the end of the temporary pandemic increases, the adjusted Thrifty Food Plan resulted in the average monthly benefit per person rising to \$186, or \$6.10 per person per day.

While SNAP is an extremely effective program, it still does not reach enough people struggling with food insecurity, including eligible seniors and low-income veterans. More outreach is needed to connect these groups to SNAP benefits and reduce barriers to assistance.

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides targeted nutrition support for expectant and new parents, infants, and young children. Healthy foods provided by WIC are associated with positive birth outcomes and address specific nutrition risks at key developmental stages, assuring a healthier next generation while also addressing long-term health care costs.

Every day, millions of people across America receive critical nutrition assistance through one or more of the 15 federal nutrition assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, school meals, the Summer Food Service Program, the Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer Program (Summer EBT), the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Nutrition Assistance for Puerto Rico (NAP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), older adult nutrition programs, the Food Distribution on Indian Reservation Program (FDPIR), and the emergency food and shelter programs.

Nutrition choices are determined and limited by economic factors. Access to affordable and nutritious foods will be improved by lifting wages, which can be done by supporting workers' rights to join a union and ensuring that federal procurement and SNAP funds support good jobs and benefits for workers along the food supply chain.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports efforts to strengthen and protect SNAP access and benefits to individuals and families with low incomes. Congress must invest resources to make benefit allotments more adequate, remove program complexities so that SNAP runs more efficiently, and learn from the lessons of the pandemic, which clearly show that safety net programs are critical and effective tools to fight hunger and poverty. **CHN supports** making replacement benefits permanent so that victims of theft have protections. We must work together to ensure eligibility to more vulnerable people such as adults who struggle to find or maintain work, formerly incarcerated individuals, college students, veterans, and immigrants, and connect more eligible people with program benefits. **CHN supports** repealing the law which subjects those with a drug felony to a lifetime ban from SNAP despite having served their time and paid their fines. **CHN supports** ensuring that program funding is adjusted to address unmet needs, keep pace with inflation, and reflect scientific realities. **CHN supports** extending eligibility for SNAP to Puerto Rico and other territories. **CHN supports** additional funding to states to protect program integrity, and supports granting tribal nations the right to administer federal nutrition programs, including SNAP and emergency food programs (TEFAP).

CHN supports efforts to protect and improve states' flexibility to provide assistance to working families with low incomes and high expenses.

CHN supports efforts to strengthen and expand access to WIC, investing robustly in the program's unique position at the intersection of food security and public health to address inequities in maternal health and child nutrition, while also ensuring adequate funding to serve all eligible individuals.

CHN supports efforts to protect, strengthen, and expand universal school meals, CACFP, and Summer EBT. **CHN supports** efforts to protect the integrity of the nutrition standards of the child nutrition and school meal programs and WIC by relying on the scientific recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM).

CHN supports adequate and anticipated-need funding for all food and nutrition programs during the annual appropriations process – including WIC, NAP, TEFAP, GusNIP, CSFP, FDPIR, Older Adult Nutrition Programs, and the emergency food and shelter programs. Fully funding these programs is vital to ensure the continuum of federal nutrition programs and the charitable food system can effectively and efficiently serve those in need.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any changes to SNAP that will cut program benefit allotments, remove participants from the program through restrictive changes, expand time limits, transfer federal responsibilities to the states, or privatize SNAP administration. CHN opposes any changes to the overall structure, benefit level, eligibility, access to, administration of, or definition of SNAP as an anti-hunger program. **CHN opposes** any policy change that would make SNAP's existing harsh work requirements even more stringent, incentivize states to place barriers to SNAP access for those in need, or require states to fund replacement benefits.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Health

Every person in the U.S. should have access to high quality, comprehensive, and affordable health care. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has expanded coverage for millions of Americans, expanding Medicaid and providing subsidies for working families and people with moderate incomes and important protections for health care consumers, including a ban on lifetime benefit caps and a prohibition on denying coverage based on pre-existing conditions. The Inflation Reduction Act has made further strides lowering prescription drug costs, most notably by allowing Medicare to negotiate drugs for the first time, and in extending and enhancing health care premium tax credits to help people afford health insurance purchased through the marketplaces. Despite ongoing progress, there is more to be done. States that have opted not to expand Medicaid have uninsured rates that are almost twice as high as states that have accepted Medicaid expansion. Medicaid programs in U.S. territories are inequitable compared with those in the states, and are dramatically underfunded. Despite the Inflation Reduction Act's critical advancements to lower prescription drug costs, too many prescription medications are still too expensive and out of reach. Too many people remain uninsured, and even for those who do have coverage, it may not provide comprehensive, quality care and many Americans struggle with high health costs and medical debt. Moreover, public health, including mental and behavioral health, programs, chronic and emerging threat prevention programs, and community health centers play a critical role in the health care system, but often lack sustainable funding support.

The last several years have brought us through an ongoing global health crisis, with over 1 million Americans losing their lives, health care systems overrun, millions of Americans losing their health insurance because of job loss, and a sharp increase in the number of Americans struggling with mental health. Before the pandemic hit, the number of people without access to health care had begun to tick upward due to the Trump Administration's relentless attacks on the ACA. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress increased funding for Medicaid and passed laws to keep individuals from losing Medicaid coverage during the national health emergency. In 2021, Congress also introduced measures to increase access to care by reducing the cost of Health Insurance Marketplace coverage (created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act or ACA). In addition, some states adopted measures to make it easier to apply for ACA coverage. These changes contributed to the increase in health

coverage of children and adults. Still, in 2023, around 8 percent of people did not have health insurance at any point during the year and the uninsured rate for children under the age of 19 increased by 0.5 percentage points to 5.8 percent between 2022 and 2023.

However, as many as 25 million people who had Medicaid coverage were disenrolled and lost their coverage as states were allowed to resume checking the eligibility of beneficiaries. As a result, more than half of those disenrolled said they had to skip or delay getting life saving care or medications as a result.ⁱⁱ Especially troubling is people of color disproportionately lost coverage or faced barriers to re-enroll including vast majorities of Black and Hispanic beneficiaries. The federal government must ensure that states maintain adequate systems to continue to serve eligible people while helping to transfer others to Affordable Care Act marketplace insurance, with substantial premium subsidies. To the maximum extent possible, states should use existing data to demonstrate continued eligibility, rather than requiring Medicaid beneficiaries to provide documentation, and should have adequate call centers to respond to people who cannot easily communicate online.

The federal government has a role to play in guaranteeing that Americans from all walks of life have access to affordable health care – that includes all age groups and people with disabilities, including a strengthened ACA, the Children’s Health Insurance Program, Medicaid and Medicare. Health care must be adequately funded without shifting costs to those who can least afford them. And building on our lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, during future epidemics and pandemics, the federal government must play a critical role in ensuring access to critical treatments, testing, and vaccines made available to everyone free of charge. Finally, health care should be broadly available for immigrants; this means no unnecessary documentation requirements, or any other barriers to healthcare for citizens and immigrants.

The epidemic of substance use disorders has taken more American lives annually than the Vietnam War and urgently requires a multi-pronged federal response emphasizing access to treatment. Such a response should also include ensuring a stable and professional behavioral healthcare workforce, research into non-addictive pain medication, effective approaches to treatment, and controls over abusive practices by the pharmaceutical industry that have led to massive over-prescribing of addictive drugs. Financial penalties on abusive companies should be vigorously sought and channeled to effective addiction services.

The federal government must play a more aggressive role in protecting people from life-threatening public health hazards. Lead poisoning remains a serious threat to

children's health. Lead contamination of Flint, Michigan's water supply was a preventable tragedy whose harm to children and the whole community will require continued services for years to come. We know that many other communities' water supplies have high levels of lead contamination that must be addressed. Further, the biggest threat of lead poisoning to children is from lead paint and dust in public buildings and residences. The scientific consensus is that there is no safe blood lead level in young children. Nevertheless, children continue to be poisoned by lead in publicly supported housing and other units available to low-income families.

Lead poisoning is just one of many public health dangers that require federal leadership and investment. Pollution in our air and water and improper protections against toxic substances disproportionately endanger low-income communities and agricultural and other workers. In addition, it is an urgent priority to protect as many people as possible from the devastation of hurricanes, floods, wildfires, and other natural disasters, and to provide extra help for the poorest people and communities, not only in immediate rescue efforts, but also in the rebuilding that must follow.

Affordable Health Care

The Coalition on Human Needs supports guaranteed affordable and high-quality health care for every person. **CHN supports** maintaining the reforms in the Affordable Care Act that protect consumers, expand coverage and improve the quality of health care, especially consumer protections that shield from discrimination against people with preexisting conditions.

CHN supports policies that make healthcare more affordable including by permanently expanding the availability and generosity of marketplace subsidies.

CHN supports robust enforcement of anti-discrimination provisions of the Affordable Care Act and other health laws.

CHN supports expanding health care access to all people who remain uninsured, including undocumented immigrants and others left out of the Affordable Care Act.

CHN supports policies that address racial and ethnic health disparities, promote racial equity, and ensure that communities of color can live free and healthy lives, without fear of racism or discrimination.

CHN supports the expansion of Medicaid in every state so that consumers may qualify for coverage based on their income, rather than family status or disability.

CHN supports adequate funding for a comprehensive and well-coordinated COVID-19 medical response, including medical coverage for testing and treatment, development and distribution of current and future vaccines, and an adequate supply of personal protective equipment. **CHN supports** maintaining a robust public health capacity to respond to future disease threats that may emerge.

CHN supports funding for discretionary programs in the Affordable Care Act, including for public health and prevention, and for community health centers.

CHN supports policies that improve affordability and lower out-of-pocket health care and drug costs for consumers.

CHN supports robust implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act's Medicare prescription drug negotiation provisions.

CHN supports advancing policies that stop insulin manufacturers from setting exorbitantly high prices and guarantee that anyone who needs insulin can afford it, no matter their type of insurance or if they are uninsured.

CHN supports policies cracking down on health care industry pricing abuses that raise costs for consumers and put them at further risk of medical debt, including policies increasing price and quality transparency and improving competition in health care markets.

CHN supports policies that hold states accountable for using every tool available to conduct outreach and enroll all eligible people in the programs and benefits available under health reform.

CHN supports federal accountability on states to reduce churn at Medicaid redetermination, including holding states accountable for utilizing data matches with other programs such as SNAP to document beneficiaries' continued eligibility for Medicaid and maintenance of adequate call centers so that people seeking to ask questions or provide documentation can do so by phone as well as online.

CHN supports providing full, permanent Medicaid funding to enable the Medicaid programs in the U.S. territories (Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) to provide the same coverage that state Medicaid programs provide.

CHN supports increased funding for integrating financial capability services into community health centers and certified community behavioral health care clinics to improve the financial well-being of vulnerable populations.

CHN supports efforts to strengthen coverage for children under the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Medicaid, and the marketplaces, including making CHIP permanent to protect the health coverage of 10 million children.

CHN supports legislation that confronts the significant systemic barriers that continue to impede communities of color and others from obtaining affordable, quality health and mental health care. **CHN supports** improving data collection and reporting to identify and measure disparities and hold our healthcare system accountable, as well as funding to support culturally congruent training for maternal health care providers.

CHN supports policies that address the maternal health crisis, including lowering barriers to coverage for maternal health care, including ensuring all states take advantage of the new option to extend Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum.

CHN supports policies that promote maternal mental health and improve infant health outcomes, including legislation and funding working to increase access to nutrition services and other supports such as breastfeeding counseling along with diapers, which are essential for fostering positive health outcomes for infants and prioritizing the mental well-being of mothers.

CHN supports policies to ensure immigrants are fully accepted and welcome in our healthcare system, including increasing eligibility for Medicaid, CHIP, premium tax credits, and other pieces of the safety net.

CHN supports policies to confront health and social needs of the justice involved population and those leaving incarceration, including authorizing pre-release Medicaid services to facilitate transition back to the community and mandating suspension rather than termination of Medicaid eligibility upon incarceration.

CHN supports funding and growing the community-based health workforce, including community health workers (CHWs) and doulas by identifying and implementing ways, in collaboration with the community-based health workforce, to sustainably finance their services.

CHN supports efforts to improve all sources of health insurance coverage to ensure that it covers all components of health, including but not limited to oral health, behavioral health, vision, hearing, and long term care.

CHN supports increased funding for Title X, the nation’s only dedicated federal family planning program. **CHN further supports** access to essential safety-net resources that increase the capacity of providers to deliver high-quality family planning and sexual health services and the implementation of the national standards set out in *Providing Quality Family Planning Services in the US* (2024).

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes restricting the availability of coverage and care across the board, including coverage for moderate- and low-income people, seniors, children, women, people involved with the criminal justice system, LGBTQ+ individuals, and immigrants.

CHN opposes any and all efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act or measures to weaken the law’s goal of expanding affordable and comprehensive coverage, and particularly any attempt to repeal the ACA without simultaneously enacting new legislation to provide affordable and comprehensive coverage. **CHN opposes** policies that weaken the consumer protections in the ACA, including efforts that expand the sale of ‘junk insurance’ that does not guarantee coverage for those with preexisting conditions.

CHN opposes restrictions on funding for the Affordable Care Act, including limits or delays in the availability of tax credit subsidies for low- and moderate-income people to purchase insurance.

CHN opposes policies that erect barriers to coverage and care, such as efforts to add work reporting requirements, drug testing, or lockouts to Medicaid programs.

CHN opposes cuts to or caps on federal Medicaid funding or changes to the structure of Medicaid that would result in shifting costs to states and to the low-income people, including children, families, seniors, and people with disabilities, who rely on it.

CHN opposes attempts to restrict or reduce state ability to generate the revenue necessary to cover the states’ share of Medicaid expenses.

CHN opposes changes to Medicare that shift more health care costs onto low-income beneficiaries.

CHN opposes restricting the availability of coverage and care for immigrants, unnecessary documentation requirements, and any other barriers to healthcare for citizens and eligible immigrants.

CHN opposes attempts to undermine the patient-provider relationship, bar qualified providers, or limit the availability of clinical services for family planning and sexual health.

CHN opposes efforts to undermine individuals' choice of providers in Medicaid. **CHN further opposes** any efforts to apply cost-sharing to family planning services within the program.

Substance Use Disorder

The Coalition on Human Needs supports full funding and implementation of all programs that expand prevention, treatment, and recovery services for individuals and families with substance use disorder, including trauma-informed care and harm reduction.

CHN supports evidence-based substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery programs and services that focus on vulnerable and at-risk populations including those in underserved rural areas, incarcerated and formerly-incarcerated, low-income people and families, pregnant mothers and those with substance-exposed newborns, military veterans, older adults susceptible to non-medical use of prescription drugs, children and youth, and other highly affected communities.

CHN supports enforcement of federal laws that require insurance companies to provide equal coverage (parity) for substance use and mental health services.

CHN supports programs, data analysis, and research that show the impact and long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on people with substance use disorder and the programs that help them. Such research should focus on dual-diagnosis of mental health conditions, the effect of social determinants of health, and expand the eligibility for federal funding beyond opioids to include methamphetamines, cocaine, synthetic cannabinoids (fentanyl), benzodiazepines, tobacco, alcohol, and other dangerous drugs/substances.

CHN supports programs and policies to address the recruitment and retention of behavioral and other health care professionals as well as peer and community support service providers who are vital to our nation's ability to help individuals recover and sustain recovery.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any regulatory changes or eligibility restrictions in federal health programs, including mandatory work requirements, that reduce services for people with substance use disorder or mental health needs.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Rental Housing and Homelessness

The United States is in the grip of an affordable housing and homelessness crisis that has continued to worsen, including housing supply and cost shortfalls in both rural and urban communities. America's affordable housing and homelessness crisis demands urgent action by Congress. Rents are high, wages are not keeping up with housing costs, households are struggling to keep up with rent and are facing eviction threats at pre-pandemic levels, and homelessness is at its highest level on record. Yet, federal investments in affordable housing have not kept pace.

Nationwide, the shortage of affordable and available rental homes for extremely low-income households runs in the millions – and it is getting more acute. As a result, millions of the lowest-income and most marginalized people cannot afford a decent place to call home. Those who are most marginalized – including people of color, people with disabilities, women and LGBTQ individuals, and others – are most impacted. Every state and every congressional district are impacted.

Federal programs exist to provide affordable housing to Americans with the lowest incomes and households living in poverty, but Congress has not spent anywhere near the amount necessary to address the problem comprehensively. As a result, three-fourths of people with incomes low enough to be eligible for rental assistance receive no help from the government. Although one-third of children live in a household with a high housing cost burden, families with children are a declining share of recipients of rental assistance.

Without housing assistance, households are often forced to make difficult choices between paying rent or utility bills, buying groceries, or visiting their doctor. In the worst cases, they experience homelessness. Homelessness and housing poverty is a policy choice, and we must build the political will to end and prevent this crisis once and for all.

Research demonstrates that when people have a safe and affordable place to live, they experience better outcomes related to health, access to nutritious food, and employment. Further, long-term studies show that when rent subsidies provide opportunities for low-income families to move to neighborhoods with better schools and other advantages, children are more likely to progress further in education and earn more as adults, and are less likely to get in trouble with the law. Helping people pay rent is particularly effective at improving the economy and creating jobs.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports providing safe, decent, affordable rental housing to low-income households, including households who are experiencing homelessness, through a full range of programs at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and elsewhere.

CHN supports robust funding for public housing, Housing Choice Vouchers, homelessness assistance services, and other investments through annual appropriations and dedicated funding.

CHN supports fully funding rental assistance, such as Housing Choice Vouchers and Project-Based Rental Assistance – as well as removing barriers that prevent households from accessing or using this critical resource – to ensure it is universally available to all eligible households.

CHN supports significantly increasing funding for homeless assistance grants to expand assistance to eligible households who cannot access these limited programs.

CHN supports major initiatives to increase the supply of affordable rental housing focused on people with lower incomes, including providing increased funding to the National Housing Trust Fund and public housing to preserve and increase the supply of safe, decent, and accessible homes affordable to extremely low-income households.

CHN supports funding of special population vouchers, such as for the Family Unification Program (FUP) and the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) Program, which strengthen families by preventing or shortening foster care placements and ease the transition to adulthood for youth leaving care who are at risk of homelessness; the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers, which provide housing and supportive services to the most vulnerable veterans; and Stability Vouchers to extend and expand the goals of the Emergency Housing Voucher program, which serves people experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence and promotes greater community collaboration.

CHN supports voluntary supportive services and other interventions that, in addition to housing, are needed to address housing stability, including substance use and mental health counseling, healthcare, employment training, and early care and learning.

CHN supports federal Housing First policies that prioritize access to affordable homes with voluntary supportive services (including comprehensive health care services), which evidence shows is the most effective strategy to bring an end to homelessness.

CHN supports the Low Income Housing Tax Credit and reforms to better serve households and communities with the greatest needs.

CHN supports laws and policies that improve the economic security of and provide financial support to tenants of rental housing, such as a guaranteed basic income and a refundable tax credit for lower income renters, along with expansions of the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit focused on households with lower incomes. CHN further supports the provision of adequate financial resources to governments and administrative agencies to implement and administer any or all of these provisions.

CHN supports the HOME, Section 811 Housing for Persons with Disabilities, and Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly programs, which bring communities needed resources to meet their range of housing needs.

CHN supports USDA Rural Housing Service programs that help meet the needs of rural renters, such as the Section 515 and Section 521 programs.

CHN supports tribal housing programs, such as the Indian Housing Block Grant and Indian Community Development Block Grant, and the Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant to ensure Native Americans have access to safe, affordable homes on their lands.

CHN supports the creation of a permanent program to provide emergency rental assistance to households at risk of housing instability and eviction, building on the successful infrastructure built during the pandemic.

CHN supports efforts to affirmatively further fair housing and expand fair housing protections on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, presence of children, and source of income.

CHN supports the creation of strong renter protections to address the power imbalance between renters and landlords.

CHN supports bans on unfair and excessive rental housing junk fees, as well as required disclosure and documentation of any permissible fees.

CHN supports requirements that debt collectors, before engaging in any collection activity, obtain and review appropriate documentation of alleged rental debts, including whether the landlord is entitled to such amounts under state law and complied with the procedural requirements of such laws. **CHN supports policies that mitigate the impact of unfair lending practices and credit reports on the ability of tenants to obtain or retain housing, including** prohibitions on reporting of rental arrears if emergency rental assistance funds have been paid, and require deletion of any such collection items on credit reports.

CHN supports requirements that landlords adopt individualized tenant screening criteria focused on assessing a rental housing applicant's ability to pay and suitability for tenancy. **CHN supports** prohibitions on tenant screening companies reporting and landlords using information—such as criminal history, eviction history, and credit history information—that is not predictive of an applicant's suitability for tenancy and is particularly likely to pose fair housing concerns.

CHN supports full implementation of the Section 3 Economic Opportunities for Low- and Very Low-Income Persons' obligation to provide job training, employment, and contracting opportunities for low and very low-income residents.

CHN supports increased funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the use of the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and other efforts to bring greater energy efficiency and climate resilience to federally-assisted housing properties and the homes of low-income households. Households will not be able to pay back utility bills accumulated during the pandemic crisis without assistance that forgives much of this debt; repayment plans will not be adequate to help families recover from the crisis.

CHN supports assistance to enable households with low incomes to pay their water bills, and to prevent water shutoffs and liens from water debt.

CHN supports expanding access to affordable broadband and phone service to reach households in every part of the U.S., including remote, rural, and low-income communities. These services are essential to connect people to benefits, jobs, education, healthcare, justice, and civic engagement. Connection to the internet is a necessity for all people to be full participants in the U.S. economy and to gain access to information that is essential in a democracy.

CHN supports increased funding for McKinney-Vento’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. At the current funding level, only 20% of school districts receive EHCY funding. The EHCY program provides critical educational rights and services to students experiencing homelessness. **CHN supports** additional measures to ensure access to sustainable homeownership, as described in the Consumer Protection and Homeownership section below.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any proposals or activities that would weaken fair housing and civil rights laws and other tenant protections or otherwise reduce or limit access to homes affordable and available to people with the lowest incomes, including federally assisted homes or rental assistance.

CHN opposes any proposals that would weaken income targeting, increase residents’ rents, negatively impact housing stability, restrict immigrant families’ access to federal housing programs, or impose work requirements on residents or time limits on assistance.

CHN opposes any proposals, including but not limited to those that use the civil and criminal legal systems, to punish unhoused people through fines, fees, arrests, and jail time rather than provide them with access to the housing and services they need to exit homelessness and remain stably housed. Solutions to homelessness must be based on evidence and prioritize what has been proven to work.

CHN opposes any proposals that use the civil and criminal legal system as a precondition to receive critical housing supports and services. Likewise, **CHN opposes** any proposals that use these systems to involuntarily commit or confine a person without individual consent for treatment and services. Conversely, CHN supports efforts to reform these systems to better serve the needs of those experiencing housing instability, homelessness and poverty, including efforts to divert and prevent people from getting entangled in these systems and addressing collateral consequences that result from such contact

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Protecting Immigrant Communities

The United States is a stronger and more vibrant nation because of our history of welcoming immigrant communities. Our prosperity is inextricably tied to immigrant contributions to our economy and culture. Protecting the rights of immigrants and refugees living in or seeking entrance into the United States and reforming our failed immigration system are moral and economic imperatives.

For decades, the United States' immigration policy has been largely focused on enforcement and so-called deterrence efforts, tearing families apart and wounding our communities. Now, immigrant communities are preparing for the possibility of mass detentions and deportations promised by the incoming Trump administration. These threats exacerbate the fear already endured daily by millions of undocumented immigrants and their loved ones, integral members of American communities unable to access citizenship and stability. At the border, people seeking asylum face punishing, restrictionist policies that are likely to become even more restrictive in the years to come.

Millions of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. are doing jobs essential to the nation's critical infrastructure, paying taxes and making invaluable contributions to workplaces and communities. Immigrants work in the toughest, hardest-to-fill jobs for the least amount of pay and with the fewest workplace protections. Yet our broken immigration system provides no pathway to citizenship for many. Non-citizen immigrant and mixed status families experience a wide range of unnecessary hardships. Immigrants, including those lawfully present in the U.S., are often shut out of basic economic support programs available to other taxpayers due to arbitrary eligibility restrictions that bear no relation to need. Many immigrants and their families are afraid to seek out benefits for which they are eligible because of regulations proposed under the first Trump administration – which may now be resurrected – that would deny lawful permanent residency status (a “green card”) to immigrants because they used public benefits for which they were eligible, or might use them in the future.

For years, Congress has dramatically increased funding for immigration detention and enforcement policies while under-investing in the community supports and services needed as investments in our shared future and economic security for all Americans. Now, the incoming administration threatens to co-opt the military and local law enforcement to create an even wider deportation dragnet.

An effective and meaningful immigration system would provide robust funding and support for states, localities, and non-governmental organizations providing social services, legal services, enforcement of labor protections, and respite to newly arrived immigrant communities. Congress must also recognize a path to citizenship as one of the most important steps to addressing poverty in the United States, as non-citizens have nearly twice the poverty rate of naturalized citizens.

Increased detentions and deportations do not make our communities safer; instead, they destabilize families and disrupt local economies. Congress must give priority to creating an immigration system that preserves family unity, provides meaningful opportunity, protects the rights of immigrants – whether at home, in the workplace, in the courtroom or beyond – and strengthens communities and the U.S. economy.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports legislative solutions for our nation’s broken, outdated immigration laws, including access to a clear, accessible and affordable path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S.

CHN supports permanent protections for undocumented youth and those with Temporary Protected Status (TPS), many of whom have lived in the U.S. for decades.

CHN supports the U.S. commitment to welcoming refugees who are fleeing persecution and imminent danger as a reflection of our moral and national values, including refugee resettlement and asylum access at U.S. borders and ports.

CHN supports cuts to funding for enforcement, detention and surveillance mechanisms of the Department of Homeland Security to mitigate harmful and abusive enforcement practices, detention expansion and militarization of the southern border.

CHN supports an increase in federal funds for legal services for immigrants facing removal and community-based services and support for immigrants, including respite and shelter for new arrivals and case management support for longer term residents who need them.

CHN supports Congress providing access to supports that will help immigrants integrate into the fabric of our communities. This should include policies that harness the skills of immigrant workers and allow them to develop their full potential, including expanding immigrants’ access to adult education and workforce development programs, English language acquisition programs, and dual generation programs, as well as access to essential documents such as drivers’ licenses.

CHN supports robust enforcement of civil rights protections for immigrants, ensuring no one is discriminated against because of their immigration status or nation of origin. This includes ensuring that people with limited English proficiency are able to fully access federally run and funded programs without barriers.

CHN supports policies that lift immigrant families out of poverty and promote economic security.

CHN supports equal access, regardless of immigration status, to safety net programs, refundable tax credits, public services and economic supports that meet basic human needs, including health services and insurance, education, employment benefits, nutrition assistance, and income supplements.

CHN supports immigrants full access to public health programs, including testing and vaccines for viruses like COVID-19.

CHN supports full labor and civil rights protections for immigrant workers, regardless of immigration status.

CHN supports the continuation and strengthening of federal policies by both immigration and labor law enforcement agencies that prevent unscrupulous employers from exploiting immigration status to deter employees from asserting their rights on the job.

CHN supports policies that build trust between local law enforcement and all community members to ensure public safety. Separating local policing from federal immigration enforcement promotes the safety of the whole community. Forcing local law enforcement to enforce or cooperate with federal immigration law does not make communities any safer and inhibits victims and witnesses of crimes from coming forward as they fear retribution or separation from their families.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes massive enforcement and deportation initiatives that will tear apart immigrant families and communities.

CHN opposes any increases to funding for a border wall, detention, or other enforcement and surveillance resources for the Department of Homeland Security.

CHN opposes the detention of immigrants and urges instead the use of community-based non-carceral alternatives to detention.

CHN opposes threats to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and to Temporary Protected Status (TPS). DACA is protecting [over 535,000 young immigrants](#) from deportation who have made important contributions to their communities and the economy. TPS designations currently provide humanitarian protection to [more than 850,000 individuals](#) – many of whom have lived in the U.S. for decades and sometimes in the same households as DACA recipients.

CHN opposes bans on entry to the United States on the basis of religion or national origin such as the Muslim and African Bans enacted during the first Trump administration.

CHN opposes threats to our family-based immigration system. Family unity must serve as one of the core tenets of the United States' immigration system.

CHN opposes policies that divide families, including separating children from parents and other actions that have a divisive or harmful effect on immigrant communities and that foster restricted access to services for eligible beneficiaries or indirect intimidation where people are forced to forego basic needs.

CHN opposes changes to the "public charge" policy that would create a de facto wealth test for immigrating to the U.S. and obtaining lawful permanent residency and would deter immigrants and their family members from enrolling in and utilizing health coverage, public services and economic supports that meet basic human needs.

CHN opposes restricting the availability of coverage and care for immigrants, unnecessary documentation requirements, and any other barriers to health care for immigrants – including LGBTQ+ immigrants – and their families.

CHN opposes questioning hospital patients about their immigration status, which makes families afraid of accessing health care and forces health care providers to abandon their ethical duties to put patients first.

CHN opposes immigration enforcement actions conducted at health care facilities, schools, faith institutions, social service sites, community centers, courts, and any other location that individuals should be able to access without fear.

CHN opposes the collection and use of data for purposes outside of their originally intended purpose to target immigrants (for example, an immigrant's data collected for a specific non-law enforcement purpose being shared with law enforcement).

CHN opposes the application of Title 42 or other bans to entry or asylum based on manner of entry or manner of transit to the United States. Such denials are contrary to U.S. and international law, create disorder at the southern border, and result in refugees being summarily returned to harm or forced to wait in Mexico, where they are in grave danger of violent crime.

CHN opposes Remain in Mexico, Asylum Cooperative Agreements, and other similar programs that offshore the United States' asylum obligations to other countries and leave asylum seekers in danger.

CHN opposes immigration policies and practices that disparately harm Black and Brown immigrants, people seeking asylum, and immigrants living in poverty.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Caregiving

All of us will need to care for ourselves or a loved one at some point in our lives. Care work is the work upon which all other work depends. Unfortunately, child care, paid family and medical leave, and home- and community-based services are textbook examples of a broken market: care costs too much for families to afford yet care workers are not paid enough to support themselves and their families. The care crisis reflects that we need to treat care as a public good, which requires public investment.

Other services can help parents trying to raise their children successfully to cope with a wide range of challenges affecting the parent and/or child. With help, families can stay safely together, avoiding the harm that can come when children are placed in foster care – foster family homes or group care settings. Since 2018, federal law allows more federal funds to be used for services and treatment to keep children safely with their families and out of foster care, prioritizing family preservation and prevention of foster care. In 2022, 52 percent of children in foster care were returned to their parents or other relatives; 38 percent were adopted or discharged to guardianship. Although the number of children entering foster care has decreased in recent years due to this focus on preservation and increased support available, there are still gross shortfalls in needed substance use disorder prevention and treatment, and mental health and social services to address related trauma and other needs; this lack of services continues to push children and families to the child welfare system.

Youth aging out of foster care or young people who leave home because of conflicts need a range of services to ensure that they can continue their education, find employment, and afford housing. Many are subject to homelessness, sex trafficking, and policing. LGBTQ youth are disproportionately likely to experience these crises. There are far too few community-based support services to help youth make a successful transition to adulthood.

Early Child Care and Education

The Coalition on Human Needs supports passage of legislation that provides funding and policy mechanisms to achieve an ambitious, transformative overhaul of existing systems to achieve child care and early learning for all. Such legislation would fairly compensate the educators doing this essential work, provide high-quality care for all children, and make early education and care affordable and accessible for all families.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports passage of legislation that provides funding and policy mechanisms to achieve an ambitious, transformative overhaul of existing systems to achieve child care and early learning for all. Such legislation would fairly compensate the educators doing this essential work, provide high-quality care for all children, and make early education and care affordable and accessible for all families.

CHN supports substantial dedicated funding to stabilize the child care sector, which should be sufficient to ensure providers can recruit and retain staff and that parents can afford care. The American Rescue Plan relief dollars expired in September 2024, and Congress must sustain adequate funding for child care to ensure states do not face a cliff that exacerbates the child care crisis for families and early educators.

CHN supports substantially increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant and increased funding for early childhood programs including Early Head Start, Head Start, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Infants and Toddlers and Preschool Programs, Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS), and other programs that give young children what they need to thrive as a downpayment on the transformative vision to build a comprehensive child care and early learning system for all.

CHN supports investments in afterschool and summer programs to help prevent children from losing important educational gains while away from school and to enable parents to work.

Home and Community Based Care

The Coalition on Human Needs supports investing in home and community-based services to ensure that every person with a disability and older adult has access to the care services they need in their own homes and communities, without waiting lists and unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

CHN supports these services being person-centered and self-directed, so that people can direct their own services and make their own decisions about the care they are receiving.

CHN supports ending the institutional bias in Medicaid, ensuring that people with disabilities and older adults can promptly access services in the community at their time of need.

CHN supports addressing health disparities and inequities with targeted strategies ensuring that older adults of color, LGBTQ individuals, people with disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, and those with intersecting identities have equitable access to high quality home and community-based services.

CHN supports adequate and comprehensive data collection on home and community-based services, including stratification by demographic characteristics, delays in services, services provided, and delivery system details to understand quality and utilization of services and to identify disparities in access.

CHN supports paying the direct care workforce that provides home and community-based services – a disproportionately female of color workforce – a living wage, including appropriate benefits.

CHN supports ensuring that the direct care workforce has access to a clear and affordable path to U.S. citizenship and supports policies that allow these workers to develop their full potential, including expanding immigrants' access to adult education and workforce development programs, English language acquisition programs, and dual generation programs, as well as access to essential documents such as drivers' licenses.

CHN supports adequate and comprehensive data collection on the direct care workforce, including data on racial and ethnic, LGBTQ+, disability and other minority status and on subgroups of workers (such direct support professionals and mental health peer support workers).

CHN supports Federal and State funding, technical assistance, and investment in developing career pathways and career ladders for the direct care workforce. This includes ensuring that the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other federal agencies appropriately track data about direct support professionals by establishing a separate category for direct support professionals within the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Code system and in other appropriate ways

Paid Leave

The Coalition on Human Needs supports creating a public national paid family and medical leave program similar to those in more than a dozen states and D.C. that covers all working people for a minimum of 12 weeks for all of the reasons covered by

the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (parental leave, family caregiving leave, personal medical leave and military caregiving and qualifying exigency leave), plus safe leave for when survivors of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault need to seek services. Paid leave should be available to all workers, including those with limited or part-time work history but who are currently or have recently been part of the labor force; it should be available to traditionally employed workers as well as to independent contractors or gig workers. The wage replacement provided by the program must be adequate enough for low wage workers, and the range of family members for whom a worker can provide care must be inclusive of a range of loved ones whether related by blood or affinity equivalent to a close family relationship. All paid leave should be job protected so that workers do not risk losing their job when they need to take paid leave. The federal program should set a floor, but should not preempt existing state laws and programs.

CHN supports the federal government helping support state paid family and medical leave programs through resources to study the feasibility of new programs and the effectiveness and areas for improvement in existing programs.

CHN supports Congress instituting a national paid sick and safe days standard guaranteeing all workers up to 7 paid sick days, so that working people can take time when they or a loved one have an urgent or short-term health need or need to access health care services; when parents need to attend health- or education-related meetings at a child's school; and when survivors of domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault need to seek services. A national paid sick days standard would be similar to the laws now in place in more than a dozen states and two dozen localities. The federal program should set a floor, but should not preempt existing state laws and programs.

CHN supports studying, enforcing and potentially expanding the executive order requiring federal contractors to provide paid sick time to employees on federal contract jobs.

CHN supports improving data collection related to paid family and medical leave and paid sick time so that the government and the public have a more detailed understanding of the gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, location, and disability and immigrant identification of workers who do and do not have access to paid leave. Improvements to data collection should also support enforcement of these protections.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes the federal government providing new or additional tax breaks to businesses that voluntarily provide paid leave in the absence of requirements compelling them to do so. If history is any guide, extending or expanding the paid leave tax credits included in the 2017 tax law and extended in 2021 would do far too little to expand paid leave access to low-wage workers.

CHN opposes paid leave programs that would draw resources from other essential programs and require workers who use paid leave benefits to repay the value of the benefits, including proposals to frontload Social Security payments after the birth or adoption of a child in exchange for delaying retirement and taking a lifetime benefit cut, or taking an advance on child tax credit payments after the birth or adoption of a child with reduced future child tax credit payments to compensate for the advance payments.

CHN opposes any proposal requiring or incentivizing employers to purchase short-term disability or family leave insurance on the private market, or offering incentives to private insurers to sell short-term disability or family leave insurance, especially in the absence of a requirement compelling employers to ensure that all workers have access to paid family and medical leave.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Education and Labor

Education: strengthening our economy and improving our future will require strengthened capacity in our education system to prepare all our children as well as adults seeking to advance or change occupations.

Even before the pandemic, there were serious inadequacies at all levels of education. People with low incomes, disproportionately people of color, have less access to quality early childhood education, are more likely to go to under-resourced schools, and are less likely to attend college. The high cost of postsecondary education has caused students to pile up debt. Even in good times, that debt has reduced the standard of living for millions of young families. While student loan payments were paused during the pandemic, a more permanent solution must be found to reduce the extent of student debt among people with low incomes.

There is an essential link between child care and the ability of parents to work. An effective education system must include high-quality early childhood programs, including quality child care, Head Start, and Early Head Start, which help children develop the skills they need to succeed in school and help parents get and keep jobs. It includes access to affordable higher education, including college or university or technical school. It includes effective and well-funded job training for adults and youth.

Labor: The economy is recovering from the pandemic, with low unemployment and more people rejoining the labor force. But racial employment disparities remain, and wages are rising less than inflation. Public sector jobs are still below pre-pandemic levels. States and localities need to commit funds to reducing staffing shortfalls, including in education. Workers also must have safe workplaces, access to paid sick days and paid family and medical leave.

Historically, union membership has led to better wages and benefits and greater job security. But the percentage of workers who belong to unions has almost been cut in half since the 1980s. Workers face many threats. Most workers are employed “at will” and can lose their jobs at any time. They may be given unpredictable schedules and less than full-time hours. Large numbers, especially in low-wage jobs, lack paid leave (including sick leave and paid family and medical leave). Many workers face

discrimination: by race or gender, pregnant workers, immigrants, LGBTQ workers, workers wrongly classified as independent contractors and thus denied benefits – even unemployed workers face discrimination based solely on their employment status. And with decreased bargaining power, wages are rising less than inflation.

Too often, work – even full-time work – does not provide sufficient compensation to raise families out of poverty. Moreover, for millions of workers, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities or those laboring in agricultural work, today’s jobs leave them struggling to meet their responsibilities at work and at home. The federal minimum wage has not been raised since 2009; since that time, inflation has eroded its value by 27 percent. Workers need improvements in wages, access to paid leave, a guarantee of sufficient hours, and parity for part-time workers. Finally, with two in three workers experiencing at least a year of joblessness for themselves or their household head during their working years, workers need the backup of a strong unemployment insurance system.

Fairness in the Workplace

The Coalition on Human Needs supports all workers’ freedom to form unions and to bargain collectively, including legislation to provide all public employees with the right to organize; to collectively bargain over wages, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment; and to access dispute resolution mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration.

CHN supports legislation to provide workers with the right to utilize a majority sign-up process (card-check) to form a union, which will help protect workers seeking to form a union from intimidation and coercion by anti-union employers.

CHN supports unions’ rights to receive non-member fees, in addition to member dues, so that all employees who benefit from union representation are contributing to the cost of that representation.

CHN supports legislation to protect employees exercising their labor rights, including increased protections for workers engaging in strikes or peaceful protest actions, increased access to the court system for workers seeking justice for violations of their rights, and increased penalties for employers that violate workers’ rights.

CHN supports legislation to prohibit employers from forcing employees seeking to organize from attending anti-union meetings, where employees are often intimidated by union-busting “persuaders.”

CHN supports legislation to facilitate first contracts for newly formed unions—nearly half of which never reach a first contract—by requiring mediation and arbitration to settle disputes.

CHN supports workplace protections that would allow pregnant women to continue to do their jobs and support their families by requiring employers to make the same kinds of accommodations for pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions as they are currently required to do for employees with disabilities.

CHN supports legislation that ensures workplace equality by protecting LGBTQ workers from employment discrimination, including discriminatory hiring, firing, promotion, wages and benefits, and protection from retaliation for reporting these practices.

CHN supports the continuation of the executive order issued under the Obama Administration which prohibits the federal government and its contractors from discriminating based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

CHN supports robust policies and adequate funding to enforce workplace protections such as the right to minimum wage and overtime pay, child labor laws, healthy and safe workplaces, and equal opportunity and equal treatment, as well as legislation to enhance workplace safety, such as preventing heat illness, addressing workplace violence, and protecting state and local government workers and other workers from health and safety hazards.

CHN supports legislative actions that will curb misclassification of employees as independent contractors.

CHN supports legislative actions to secure full employee rights for workers currently excluded from federal labor law protections, including domestic workers, farmworkers, day laborers, in-home child care providers and others.

CHN supports legislative actions that will curb employers' abuse of immigrant workers.

CHN supports legislation that would make the practice of hiring discrimination against the long-term unemployed illegal.

CHN supports legislation that would limit employers' use of credit checks to screen potential employees, thus leveling the playing field for those workers who have suffered through economic hard times.

CHN supports legislation that would limit employers' use of criminal background checks to screen potential employees until they have received a conditional offer of employment. Thereafter, such background checks should only be considered in a manner that is consistent with the [EEOC's Enforcement Guidance on Arrest and Conviction Records in Employment Decisions](#).

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any federal action that would erode worker protections, including the right to organize, to receive fair wages, to work in healthy and safe workplaces, to be whistleblowers, and to be free from discrimination. **CHN opposes** any federal action, including in the courts that would weaken public sector unions by prohibiting them from collecting fees from nonmembers to cover the basic costs that the union incurs representing them. **CHN opposes** any efforts to roll back legal protections and agency enforcement efforts addressing pregnancy discrimination. **CHN opposes** politicizing the federal government and state-level workforce administering federal benefits by eliminating civil service protections for large numbers of career employees. **CHN opposes** turning back the clock on federal minimum wage and overtime protections, including for home care workers. **CHN opposes** immigration enforcement actions that undermine the enforcement of labor, health and safety, anti-retaliation and other employment laws.

Adult Education and Workforce

The Coalition on Human Needs supports revitalizing the workforce development and training system to create economic security and mobility for all workers. The system should help workers access jobs that pay family-sustaining wages and include critical benefits such as healthcare and paid leave, and enable workers to build wealth. **CHN supports** workforce programs that prioritize and strengthen initiatives to support Black, Latinx, and Indigenous workers, immigrants, opportunity youth and young adults, women, youth and adults impacted by the criminal legal justice system, unhoused individuals, and jobseekers with low incomes.

CHN supports increasing federal support for all workforce programs, including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs for adults, dislocated workers, and youth; national and local transitional and subsidized adult and youth training programs for populations experiencing structural barriers to employment; the Employment Service, as well as additional investments in literacy, adult basic education, and career and technical education programs; rehabilitation services; and providing training for nontraditional occupations or those in which one gender is less than 25 percent of the workforce. In order to receive federal funding, workforce programs should prioritize job quality and counter (rather than reinforce) the effects of occupational segregation and racial discrimination in the labor market.

CHN supports the reauthorization of the National Apprenticeship Act (NAA) to prioritize investment in proven workforce training that meets high job quality standards, including high-quality registered apprenticeships, pre-apprenticeships, and youth apprenticeship programs, with a focus on ensuring individuals with structural barriers to employment can access and succeed in apprenticeship programs.

CHN supports expanding full access to all workforce development programs and services authorized under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the National Apprenticeship Act to undocumented immigrant workers and reaffirming access for DACA recipients, TPS recipients, and all other new Americans.

CHN supports significantly increasing the size of and access to Pell Grants and other forms of scholarship aid so people with low incomes pursuing a postsecondary education are not burdened with debt as they attempt to gain a foothold in the labor force. Pell Grant awards should be permanently indexed to inflation to maintain the strength of the benefit over time. **CHN supports** repealing the Federal Pell Grant eligibility ban for youth and adults impacted by the criminal legal system to reinstate equitable access to quality and affordable postsecondary education to this population as well as the repeal of restrictions for undocumented students who receive or would be eligible for DACA status.

CHN supports greater alignment of workforce development, postsecondary, and human services programs, including child care assistance, access to health care and mental health services, as well as transportation and housing assistance to create sustainable pathways to marketable postsecondary credentials and economic security for adults with low incomes and opportunity youth.

CHN supports building robust career pathway programs that include integrated education and training strategies along with comprehensive support services; creating earn-and-learn opportunities – including subsidized and transitional employment programs – which can improve economic security and stability, while also connecting workers to future opportunities; preserving the national job-training program for migrant and seasonal farmworkers; and aligning planning and accountability policies across core programs to support more unified approaches to serving individuals with barriers to employment.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes policies that promote rapid reemployment or “work first” policies rather than needed wage replacement for jobless workers or education, training, and placement help for quality jobs.

CHN opposes predicating the receipt of a public benefit on an individual's employment status or participation in training or job placement programs. This includes any requirement that SNAP recipients participate in SNAP Education and Training programs to receive SNAP benefits.

Job Quality

The Coalition on Human Needs supports an increase in the federal minimum wage to \$17/hour for all workers indexed to average wage growth so that it cannot erode due to Congressional neglect. All sub-minimum wages should be gradually eliminated – those for workers with disabilities, youth and student workers. Furthermore, the tipped minimum wage should be eliminated, establishing one robust minimum wage for all workers.

CHN supports policies and adequate funding to enforce workplace protections such as the right to no less than the minimum wage, healthy and safe workplaces that are free from harassment of any kind, equal opportunity, equal treatment, and equal pay.

CHN supports restoring vitality to the federal overtime law by defending and finalizing a new regulation with an increased salary threshold that automatically updates periodically to prevent stagnation. Congress should also pass legislation raising the salary threshold to approximately \$85,000, index the threshold to inflation, and reform the “duties test” mandating that workers must spend a majority of their time doing exempt work in order to be exempt from the overtime requirement. **CHN supports** requiring the payment of prevailing wages in federal contracting. **CHN supports** federal legislation to improve gender pay equity and enforcement of equal pay laws.

CHN supports legislation to create fair job schedules, including proposed laws that would give workers the right to ask for a change in their schedule without fear of retaliation; to receive sufficient advance notice of their job schedules; to receive a minimum number of hours of work per week; to receive reporting pay if sent home from work early; to receive compensation if required to be on-call or scheduled for a “call-in shift;” and (for part-time workers) to receive access to available hours prior to the hiring of additional part-time workers. **CHN supports** legislation to create equitable access to benefits and pay for part-time workers.

CHN supports executive actions that advance the equal pay and non-discrimination policies set out above and apply high-road requirements to the federal contracting workforce. **CHN supports** vigorous and robust strategic enforcement of wage and hour laws and federal contracting requirements related to equal pay and fair wages.

CHN supports improving the economic and social well-being of workers and their families by empowering workers to form and join unions. Unions are one of the best vehicles for improving workers’ and their families’ economic resources and the reduction in union membership has hurt workers, fed income inequality, and lead to widespread wage stagnation. Our labor laws need to be strengthened to prevent irresponsible employers from intimidating pro-union employees. **CHN supports** the freedom to form unions and negotiate free from fear, intimidation, and interference. *(See [Fairness in the Workplace section.](#))*

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes any legislation that would undermine or erode existing state and local labor standards, such as laws that fully preempt any attempts to improve workplace standards.

Unemployment Insurance

The Coalition on Human Needs supports strong state UI programs that reflect the needs of today's working families. Congress must require states to provide up to 26 weeks of regular UI benefits, which, in an economy of rising unemployment durations, would provide jobseekers, especially lower-wage jobseekers, with a more realistic window of time to find suitable new employment. Further, in recognition of the prominent role of part-time work in the U.S. economy, especially in large service-providing industries, Congress must ensure that part-time workers are eligible in all states. **CHN supports** continued eligibility of gig and self-employed workers for unemployment benefits, as was provided through Pandemic Unemployment Assistance.

CNH supports federal standards that require states to increase UI benefit amounts to meet the needs of workers, particularly the high percentage of Black, brown and indigenous workers who are underpaid and relied on their full wages to afford basic necessities.

CHN supports an adequately funded UI system, to ensure it can continue meeting its goals of stabilizing the economy and households during difficult times without harsh benefits cuts that harm working families. As a first step, Congress must raise the portion of annual earnings subject to federal UI taxation, known as the taxable wage base, which at \$7,000, is highly regressive. Recent policy reform proposals have put forward levels ranging from one-third to one-half of the Social Security taxable wage base. Notably, this would cause state wage bases to rise automatically and dramatically increase the health of state trust funds, meaning that they would be less likely to need massive federal loans during high-use periods such as recessions.

CHN supports fair access to state UI programs, supported by full federal funding of program administration, and strong enforcement of applicable federal standards, to ensure state claims-filing processes can be easily understood and accomplished by most workers, including workers with literacy challenges, workers with limited English proficiency, older workers, workers without access to the internet, and disabled workers.

CHN supports federal investments in layoff aversion strategies like short-time compensation, also known as work sharing, which lets firms reduce work hours as an alternative to layoffs during temporary downturns. UI benefits would then supplement worker earnings until conditions recover.

CHN supports a revitalized Employment Service, which provides cost-effective job-search assistance to jobseekers, including UI claimants, and greater investment in Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments, or RESEA, for UI claimants, especially those identified as the most likely to become long-term unemployed.

CHN supports Congressional authorization of a Job Seekers Allowance, which would be a modest, means-tested benefit to workers who are ineligible for UI, but who are looking for work and need financial assistance in order to be able to meaningfully search for work and support themselves and their families while doing so.

CHN supports reforms to the Extended Benefits (EB) program, the permanent federal-state program that extends the benefit duration of claimants who exhaust their regular state benefits during recessions. To ensure EB ramps up swiftly during difficult times, state activation criteria, also known as “triggers,” should be based on state unemployment rates, rather than insured unemployment rates, which are stricter; and payments should be fully federally funded, as state trust fund reserves usually are low or depleted during recessions.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes proposals that would grant states waivers of important federal UI requirements, for such purposes as diverting scarce UI trust fund dollars to conduct demonstration projects that allege to facilitate the reemployment of a state’s UI recipients but that condition UI receipt on factors unrelated to substantive eligibility; or to defy federal UI administrative standards, first established to ensure the prompt payment of benefits to eligible jobless workers. Current federal UI law grants states broad authority to define UI eligibility rules and disqualification penalties. In addition, many states demonstrated during the Great Recession that they have the capability and resources under existing federal UI law to employ strategies that help facilitate reemployment.

CHN opposes any proposals that draw UI eligibility distinctions based on individual earnings. Involuntary job loss and long-term unemployment impose a wide range of material and personal hardships. The lowest wage workers shouldn’t be ineligible because of too-small earnings, and it would be incorrect to presume that even the highest-wage earners are immune to these outcomes.

K-12 Education

Children have a right to high-quality and accessible pre-K-12 education, and preserving public education is of the utmost importance. Children deserve an education that provides the necessary preparation for global workforce competition. They also deserve an education that equips them with the knowledge needed to vote,

volunteer, and lift their voices in public life through stage-appropriate instruction, learning about their culture, democracy, and history. Schools are places to build relationships and have positive social interactions, and 30 million children rely on schools for food each day. Still, we recognize that many children in historically marginalized communities and children of color have been shortchanged in their education long before the pandemic. These children, and children with disabilities and English learners, need greater federal investments in their education for the long-term.

We know that children who attend excellent schools benefit from a range of opportunities designed to develop their intellectual abilities and social skills. The benefits are long-lasting, as educational achievement is linked to higher lifetime earnings and better health. However, there remains a stubborn achievement gap in America's schools due to disparities in funding and teacher training.

CHN supports the essential resources and safeguards our schools, students, and educational communities require. The focus should be on providing safe and healthy environments for students and educators, and the resources to address students' instructional and psychosocial needs. Teachers, principals, and school staff are working hard to make the current learning settings work for all students and they deserve support as the environment and methods for learning evolve. **CHN supports** safeguarding civil rights protections for students and educators, specifically as they relate to Title IX, Title VI, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Civil Rights Act.

CHN supports making every public school a safe and welcoming environment for all, with high academic standards that prepare students for work, civic participation, and higher learning. This will require support for improved learning environments for students, such as dedicating funding for community schools, which can help children recover from the devastating academic, social, health, nutrition, and safety effects of the pandemic. We need to invest in what works, such as evidence-based high-quality summer learning and comprehensive afterschool programs, and high-dosage tutoring, especially for those students who attended under-resourced schools before the pandemic and were most impacted by COVID-19. Other proven strategies that deserve further investments include pre-K expansion, mental health support for students and additional mental health professionals, and improvements in school indoor air quality and facilities.

CHN supports sustained investments in public K-12 education that can support our students into the future and make schools more equitable, supportive and safe places to learn. CHN believes all students should have high-quality, certified teachers and other educators who meet their needs and reflect the diversity of our nation's students.

CHN supports eliminating the educator shortage for every school by ensuring that schools are appropriately staffed, paying educators competitively, expanding access to high-quality and affordable pathways into the profession, and increasing educator diversity.

CHN supports fully funding the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act as well as fully funding ESEA's Title I program to support underserved students.

CHN supports evolving public school funding from primary reliance on property taxes to a more equitable revenue model.

CHN opposes the proposed elimination of the Department of Education and other attacks on the administrative state. This would take away taxpayer dollars from public schools, where 90% of students - and 95% of students with disabilities - learn, and give them to unaccountable and discriminatory private schools.

CHN opposes school voucher programs or any other program that provides public funds for for-profit entities or private schools, such as education savings accounts (ESAs) or tax credits. These programs disproportionately harm the most underserved communities, including low-income Black and Brown families along with students with disabilities and rural communities, while threatening the public education system that is the backbone of our democracy. Public dollars should stay in public schools, and voucher programs defund public education and allow discrimination.

Higher Education

CHN supports substantially increased investment in federal financial aid programs, particularly the Pell Grant, to ensure that students from low-income households have access to postsecondary education. It is well understood that the cost of college has skyrocketed in recent decades, outpacing the purchasing power of the Pell Grant. (Today, the Pell Grant covers just 29% of the average cost of tuition, fees, room, and board at public four-year colleges in comparison with 1975 when it covered 79% of such costs.) Yet, it is well-documented that the earnings of a college graduate far exceeds that of a non-college graduate. In fact, a bachelor's degree recipient will earn \$1 million over the course of a lifetime, ultimately contributing more back into the economy through taxes.

CHN supports significant increases to the Federal TRIO Programs (TRIO), which provide 875,000 students annually with tutoring, personal advising, peer mentoring, and other college access and support services that promote postsecondary enrollment, persistence, and completion for low-income students who would become the first members of their families to earn college degrees. There are seven

Federal TRIO Programs that range from pre-college – Upward Bound, Upward Bound Math-Science, Upward Bound Veterans, Talent Search, and Educational Opportunity Centers – to collegiate programs – Student Support Services and the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. While financial aid is critically important, it is not and cannot be the only form of support provided to students to ensure their success. For example, without the support provided by TRIO, low-income students are unable to fully avail themselves of the opportunity created by federal financial aid. TRIO programs – which serve students from middle-school through adult education and include specialized programs for students with disabilities and veterans – have a strong track record of success, having produced over 6 million college graduates since the programs’ inception in 1964. However, TRIO is only able to serve a fraction of eligible students. Therefore, robust increases are needed to ensure that even more low-income students have access to the services that have a dramatic impact on students’ chances for postsecondary success.

CHN supports generous, streamlined student loan relief and cancellation programs that incorporate the concerns of low-wage earners, people of color, non-completers and other student loan borrowers/debtors that the system has forgotten. It is no secret that student debt has overtaken credit cards as the most persistent challenge facing American borrowers. Headline after headline recounts how debt burdens, coupled with grim employment prospects and low-wages, have caused citizens to relinquish the chance to purchase homes, start families, and otherwise achieve what is considered the “American Dream”—the pursuit of which led many such individuals to attend college in the first place. Existing student loan cancellation programs for borrowers who cannot repay due to school misconduct or closures, or due to a disability, are necessary but insufficient. After a long record of problems with targeted student loan relief programs, recent improvements by the Biden Administration promise relief to many more eligible borrowers and that progress should be defended against potential rollbacks. However, these narrow programs will never reach millions of low-wage borrowers who risk being stuck in decades of debt for pursuing an education. More relief is needed. We must be sure to craft policies that incorporate the concerns of those individuals who do not make headlines – those who may have lower debt burdens, and those who default but for whom such debt is all-consuming due to their economic circumstances, and those who default and face financial devastation because the student loan system lacks an adequate safety net. This is particularly true for non-completers who emerged from colleges with a debt burden, but no degree, as well as for those who have unsustainable debt levels from for-profit schools. Additionally, **CHN supports** affordable repayment options, such as the SAVE plan, that provide affordable, income-based repayment amounts for low-wage student loan borrowers and promise such borrowers can become debt-free by meeting their repayment obligations.

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Public Policy Priorities for 2023 and 2024

Social and Economic Justice

Systemic barriers and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, immigration status, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, or poverty subject many in our nation to far-reaching inequalities. Many are hit harder by environmental hazards, get evicted or go to prison because they cannot afford a lawyer, are more likely to pay exorbitant interest to borrow money, experience disproportionate levels of poverty, hunger, and economic insecurity, get evicted, suffer greater levels of ill health, and are more likely to be excluded from the voting booth.

Far too many people of color and people with low incomes in this country are shut out of mainstream financial services and find themselves trapped in a cycle of debt when they seek a mortgage, buy a car, or borrow for other expenses from unscrupulous lenders.

From tainted water supplies to lead-based paint to poor air quality, environmental hazards disproportionately affect low-income communities, communities of color and people with pre-existing health conditions.

People with disabilities are roughly twice as likely as people without disabilities to live below the poverty line, and people of color are disproportionately likely to experience disability or illness. People with disabilities, regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, or other demographic grouping, continue to face barriers to employment, education, housing, transportation, and health care because of inaccessible and inadequately-funded state and federal programs, outdated public policies and discrimination despite the legal protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Far too many people with low incomes and people of color lack access to justice. They are unable to seek legal redress because they cannot afford to hire an attorney. They are subject to patterns of mass incarceration, racial profiling, police misconduct, sentencing inequity, barriers to employment and civic participation once a sentence has been served. While incarcerated, they again face increased risk of contracting the coronavirus.

A growing number of people face discrimination at the ballot box. Onerous photo I.D. laws discourage voting, as do cutbacks in early voting and elimination of precincts in predominantly Black, Latinx, and other minority neighborhoods. Some states discriminatorily limit access to mailed ballots and voter drop boxes, especially

needed during a pandemic. Harmful court decisions have weakened voting rights, which disproportionately hurt communities of color and low-income communities. And the wealthiest donors have disproportionately more influence in the political process than average voters, skewing legislative action towards more tax cuts for the well-connected and fewer investments to build shared prosperity.

The Black Lives Matter movement furthered the cause of racial justice, equity, and police reform in 2020 and beyond. Congress and the Administration need to enact policies that align with these goals.

The administration of the 2020 Census was hampered in many ways, from attempts at unlawful political interference by the Trump Administration to the constraints caused by the pandemic. Failure to correct inadequacies in the count will lead to more inequalities in representation and federal funding decisions. Our democracy requires counting every person residing in the United States.

Many reforms are needed to remedy these injustices. We cannot meet human needs without protections against all these discriminatory practices and systems. Congress must pass a new Voting Rights Act. We also need to support judicial and Executive Branch nominees with a demonstrated record of combating unequal treatment and to oppose those whose views and record favor wealthy and powerful interests.

The president's nominees to key cabinet, agency and advisory positions have an enormous impact on all of human needs policies, programs and services. Similarly, nominations to the federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, are of concern to the needs of low-income communities. The people who occupy these positions have the ability to establish and implement good policies or bad policies that affect every aspect of low-income and other vulnerable people's lives.

Policies for People with Disabilities

The Coalition on Human Needs supports policies that promote the empowerment, inclusion, independence, integration, and self-determination of people with disabilities in all aspects of society.

CHN supports policies that increase the availability of affordable, accessible, and inclusive housing and transportation.

CHN supports policies that enhance inclusive educational opportunities for children with disabilities, including under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other relevant laws, and through positive school climate policies, with special attention to meeting the needs of children with disabilities during times of remote learning due to the pandemic or future similar emergency conditions.

CHN supports policies that seek to reduce the disproportionately high unemployment rate for people with disabilities and create the opportunity for competitive integrated employment by means of workplace supports, job training, rehabilitation services, education-to-workforce transition programs, work incentives programs, Medicaid buy-ins, ending the use of 14(c) certificates that allow employers to pay disabled workers subminimum wages, and rigorous enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other civil rights laws.

CHN supports policies that enable people with disabilities to build financial security and pursue their economic goals.

CHN supports policies that provide opportunities for people with disabilities to have greater access to long-term supports and services in the home and community.

CHN supports policies that would improve the direct care workforce through training, adequate wages, access to paid leave and other supports, and that would support family caregivers of people with disabilities.

CHN supports the continued role of Social Security in providing a basic standard of living for people with disabilities and elders, with full inclusion for all residents of the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa.

CHN supports ending the offset of Social Security payments and other income intended to alleviate poverty for repayment of federal debts.

CHN supports efforts to remove barriers and automate the total and permanent disability (TPD) discharge program intended to cancel the federal student loans of borrowers whose disability prevents them from earning a meaningful income.

CHN supports the full inclusion of people with disabilities in society by removing the institutional bias in the Medicaid program and making home and community based long term services and supports readily available.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes policies that threaten the rights of people with disabilities under the ADA and other civil rights laws.

CHN opposes policies that punish people with disabilities for marrying and building families.

CHN opposes policies that have the effect of cutting back on Medicaid, Social Security, education, employment services, housing, accessible transportation, and other critical supports for people with disabilities.

CHN supports legislation to explicitly ban forced sterilization of disabled people and reformation of guardianship laws to protect bodily autonomy.

Community Safety

Community safety is more than just the absence of crime. Community safety is about nurturing positive, welcoming environments where everyone can thrive and live without fear. This vision is rooted not in increasing police or punitive systems, but in making strategic, evidence-based investments rooted in public health and prevention — investments that address the root causes of crime, while strengthening the underlying fabric of our communities and our democracy. It is a vision of safety that is fundamentally multidisciplinary, centered on community, and deeply collaborative between residents, organizations, and all levels of government.

This policy framework for community safety and thriving is more critical today than ever. Although crime has generally been [decreasing nationwide](#), with homicides dropping at [their fastest pace ever](#), approximately [80% of Americans](#) believe that crime is rising — and politicians are reacting accordingly, promising “tough on crime” policies and a [retrenchment of progressive reforms](#). At the same time, young people are dying from gun violence [at historic rates](#), even as [youth suicides](#) continue to climb. These realities underscore why a positive, forward-looking agenda for community safety and thriving is so critical: More police will not address the basic insecurities driving this missing sense of safety, keep our kids safe, connect vulnerable people to care, or create the sense of belonging that helps communities thrive.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports a federal budget that invests deeply in community safety in thriving, including through three pillars that anchor this evidence-based agenda — community-based models for resolving crises, investments in the “social determinants” of safety, and new institutions that treat safety as a matter of public health.

Community safety requires programs that represent “care first” ways to prevent, intervene in, and manage crises, including community violence intervention (CVI) and civilian or “mobile” crisis response. CVI, a model that employs trained professionals to intervene and de-escalate violent conflicts, engages those who are most likely to perpetrate or experience violence using approaches that are rooted in building relationships, resolving conflicts peacefully, and developing a culture of trust. Moreover, they go hand-in-hand with another critical model — civilian or “mobile” crisis response — that sends social workers and other non-police professionals to deescalate mental health, behavioral health, and low-level crises, then connects individuals to much-needed care, and have shown significant promise for reducing crime. Both models have shown significant promise to reduce crime and violence, while boosting community health and wellbeing. Moreover, they substantially reduce the need for police deployment, reducing the chances of interactions that too often end in violence.

Community safety also requires programs that invest in the building blocks or “social determinants” of safety, which include those areas that evidence shows to reduce violence and harm most effectively. These building blocks include community health, nutrition, and treatment services, including treatment for substance abuse and mental health disorders. They include investments in economic stability, including youth employment, workforce development, cash transfers, and child care since, when people feel financially secure, they are less likely to engage in activities that compromise community safety. They include investments in place-based “built design” investments like parks, streetlights, and remediating vacant lots, as well as in affordable housing — especially supportive housing for vulnerable individuals. They also include family-focused investments like youth programs, schools, school-based violence prevention, and wraparound services for families.

Finally, to make these budgetary investments most effective, community safety requires the development of an institutional architecture that treats safety as a matter of public health. This architecture may include new entities at the Department of Health and Human Service that can administer these grants for CVI, crisis response, and other health-centered models of violence prevention, as well as more research capacity to understand which targeted investments can best bolster safety outcomes — and to ensure that other agencies are aware of how their programs can better advance safety goals.

CHN supports the implementation of “built design” community investments and initiatives like redesigning roadways, reducing traffic congestion, maintaining vacant lots, enhancing cleanliness through trash removal, and making robust investments in trees, parks, community gardens, street lighting, and other infrastructure [proven to reduce violence and crime](#).

CHN supports comprehensive community violence intervention (CVI) strategies that reduce violence through education, outreach, and support services. These initiatives engage community members, provide conflict resolution training, and promote positive relationships among residents — creating a safer environment for all people. Investments should center fully community-based models, including models that focus on youth.

CHN supports the development of civilian-led crisis response (“mobile crisis response”) teams that can effectively address emergency situations without the need for police intervention. These teams are trained in de-escalation techniques, mental health first aid, and community support, ensuring that individuals in crisis receive appropriate care and assistance.

CHN supports investments in community health by expanding healthcare services, treatment, and harm reduction to underserved populations. This includes increasing access to treatment for substance abuse and mental health disorders, as well as enhancing nutrition access, reducing food insecurity, and increasing the supply of community health workers (CHW) who can staff these programs and other violence reduction initiatives.

CHN supports promoting economic equity by creating job opportunities and backing youth employment initiatives — especially summer jobs, which have been shown to be [extremely effective at reducing youth arrests](#) for violent crime. This includes enhancing job availability and quality through skill development programs, job opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, apprenticeship opportunities, and ensuring access to affordable, high-quality childcare, which enhances financial stability now and reduces crime in the long-run.

CHN supports strategic investments in housing solutions that promote stability and well-being while reducing incidents of violence and crime. This includes supportive housing for vulnerable populations, including survivors and individuals who are formerly incarcerated, and using vouchers to increase housing affordability.

CHN supports investments in school resources that support youth physical, mental, and emotional health helping to reduce youth violence, juvenile justice or criminal-legal involvement, and the school-to-prison pipeline. Key examples include youth mentorship, school-based violence prevention, counselors in schools, and wraparound services.

CHN supports investments in infrastructure that can administer community safety grants to fund evidence-informed interventions that treat safety as a public health issue, thereby ensuring that these programs have the requisite expertise to support non-carceral, preventative safety approaches.

CHN supports prohibiting the transfer of military weapons, vehicles, and tactical equipment from the Department of Defense to state and local law enforcement, such as the 1033 program while increasing oversight and accountability over police departments and other carceral systems.

Access to Justice

The Coalition on Human Needs supports a significant increase in federal funding for civil legal services to a level sufficient to address the current civil justice crisis, which is currently allowing 80 percent of low-income Americans' civil legal needs to go unmet -- and which sets up a two-tiered system of justice based on wealth.

CHN supports enforcement by the U.S. Department of Justice of the right to counsel in criminal cases through suits and withholding federal grants against jurisdictions that are not fulfilling their Sixth Amendment obligations to provide counsel.

CHN supports reform of harmful and overly broad Legal Services Corporation (LSC) restrictions on the legal assistance that may be provided with federal funds--many of which have tied legal aid programs' hands in critical ways and impeded their ability to enforce the rights of low-income communities. Examples of reforms to LSC restrictions that CHN supports include: eliminating the restrictions on class action litigation; lifting the "one drop" rule, which prevents LSC programs that accept even \$1 in federal LSC funds from using other funds for restricted purposes; and reforming LSC restrictions on representing immigrant clients, welfare advocacy, and women's health.

CHN supports access to justice and to the courts to enforce rights under the law and to receive appropriate relief from all responsible parties.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes forced arbitration, class action bans, and other devices that make it more difficult for individuals to access the justice system.

Reforming the Criminal Legal System

The Coalition on Human Needs supports passage of a federal anti-profiling law that prohibits biased policing, like the End Racial and Religious Profiling Act, with prohibitions on profiling based on religion, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, proficiency with the English language, immigration status, and housing status, as well as race or ethnicity.

CHN supports requiring law enforcement agencies that receive federal funding to report any police-civilian encounters disaggregated by race/ethnicity, including encounters that involve the use of force, sexual assault, misconduct, and the deaths of individuals not technically in the custody of law enforcement, to the National Law Enforcement Accountability Database.

CHN supports the enforcement of the Death in Custody Reporting Act.

CHN supports building on the FBI's attempts to collect data on police-community encounters, including data on police encounters with people with disabilities--as well as disabilities acquired while in police custody, and requests as well as provision, denial, or removal of reasonable accommodations at any point while in police custody

CHN supports mandatory training on implicit bias, de-escalation, crisis intervention, procedural justice, adolescent development, and proper interactions with persons with disabilities and mental illness.

CHN supports a necessary standard to lethal use of force interactions and **supports** a requirement that law enforcement use de-escalation techniques to defuse conflict. **CHN supports** a ban on no-knock warrants and use of chokeholds. **CHN supports** a national misconduct registry for law enforcement officers who have been dismissed for excessive use of force or other civil rights violations.

CHN supports diversion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions away from the criminal legal system and into appropriate treatment, housing, and community-based services as a more effective and cost-efficient alternative to arrest and detention. **CHN supports** adequate investment in community-based care for mental health and disability, to prevent people with disabilities from needless and unjust incarceration--and the reinvestment of funds saved by policies that reduce mass incarceration towards preventive policies and resources such as community-based care, housing, and mental health services. **CHN supports** allowing nonviolent and violent offenders who have mental health challenges to try their case in mental health court instead of the traditional court system. **CHN supports** leveraging federal funding to discourage state and local governments from policing and criminalizing activities such as begging, sitting, or lying on sidewalks, loitering, and so-called vagrancy laws.

CHN supports legislation that amends current law to provide a standard that ensures criminal liability for civil rights violations that are a result of police misconduct. To that end **CHN supports** reforms that abolish qualified immunity and modify 18 USC 242 mens rea standard to a “reckless” standard. **CHN supports** abolition of the 1033 program which has militarized police on our streets.

CHN supports sentencing reform legislation that specifically addresses front-end drivers of mass incarceration that have led to overcrowding and overspending at the federal level on over-criminalization. **CHN supports** using federal funds to give grants to diversion programs as an alternative to mass incarceration. **CHN supports** removing carveout languages for violent offenders in the areas of sentencing reform and diversion programs.

CHN supports the elimination of mandatory minimum sentencing laws for all drug-related crimes.

CHN supports the adoption of body-worn camera policies that adequately protect privacy rights, civil rights, and civil liberties. Law enforcement agencies should: (1) develop body-worn camera policies publicly, seeking community and stakeholder input; (2) commit to a set of narrow and well-defined purposes for which cameras and their footage may be used; (3) specify clear operational policies for recording, retention, and access of footage; (4) make footage available to promote accountability with appropriate privacy safeguards in place; and (5) preserve the independent evidentiary value of officer reports by prohibiting officers from viewing footage before filing their report.

CHN supports passage of bipartisan legislation that provides state and local governments and agencies with resources to support programs that assist reentering individuals with financial help, housing, healthcare, cognitive behavioral services, technology training, employment, education, etc.

CHN opposes any policy riders that prohibit people with criminal records from being eligible for federal housing assistance and other public benefits such as SNAP, TANF, and Pell Grants.

CHN supports the implementation of policies at the federal, state and local levels that support reentry – including policies to make reentry programs more accessible for people with disabilities – and remove harmful barriers to basic necessities such as employment, housing, education and training, and income and nutrition assistance, including repeal of the lifetime bans in SNAP, TANF, and the American Opportunity Tax Credit for people with felony drug convictions.

CHN supports increased funding for civil legal services programs (as described in Access to Justice) that play a critical role in helping people with records navigate barriers to employment and critical reentry supports

CHN supports legislation to expand access to expungement and sealing of criminal records, to enable the tens of millions of Americans currently facing barriers to employment, housing, and education due to the lifelong stigma of a criminal record, to move on with their lives and have a fair shot at economic opportunity. **CHN supports** “Clean Slate” legislation in the states to make record-clearing automatic once individuals have completed their sentences and remained crime-free. (Under petition-based record-clearing systems, over 90% of eligible people never get their records cleared, due to costly filing fees and complex bureaucratic processes that can be impossible to navigate successfully without a lawyer.) **CHN supports** federal funding to help states facing budget gaps offset the one-time upfront costs of implementing automated record-clearance to remove barriers to work for their states’

workers facing employment barriers due to old criminal records. CHN supports bipartisan legislation to create a federal record-clearing remedy and to make clearance of eligible federal records automatic upon completion of sentence and an appropriate period crime-free, such as the Clean Slate Act. CHN supports legislation that would eliminate criminal justice debt as a barrier to record clearing.

CHN supports legislation to adopt Fair Chance Hiring Practices (Ban the Box) and remove questions regarding conviction and arrest histories from job applications and delay inquiry into arrest and conviction history until after the initial offer. **CHN supports** federal, state, and local Fair Chance Licensing, which reforms overly broad occupational licensing restrictions, which have become another major barrier to employment for people with records.

CHN supports legislation to reauthorize and provide robust funding for the Second Chance Act. These important grants provide much needed reentry support for the formerly incarcerated and people with criminal convictions through grants to community based organizations. These funds produce a large rate of return on investments by helping people when they may be at their most vulnerable, the period after incarceration. Ultimately, this investment will result in lower recidivism and increase successful reentry for returning citizens.

CHN supports an increase in federal funding of Community Violence Intervention Prevention Initiatives.

CHN supports an end to unpaid prison labor by including incarcerated individuals in the Fair Labors Standard Act.

CHN supports legislation that eliminates mandatory minimum sentencing, expands the federal safety valve, providing judicial second look, alternatives to incarceration, and ending drug conspiracy laws.

CHN supports the decriminalization of marijuana possession and the automatic clearance of federal marijuana records, such as the MORE Act.

CHN supports reform of cash bail, which sets up a two-tiered system of justice based on wealth.

CHN supports reform of harmful fines and elimination of fees at the federal, and especially the state and local levels--which have become a major driver of poverty and incarceration--as well as strong guidance on fines and fees issued by the Department of Justice's Office of Access to Justice. The federal government and state governments

should prohibit unfair, deceptive, or abusive collection of fines and fees. Federal and state governments should end profiteering, including through predatory prison phone and video-calling rates, which imposes extortionate costs on justice-involved people and their families and can jeopardize successful reentry.

CHN supports legislation that would end debt-based driver's license suspensions that prevent people from getting to work, from attending medical appointments, and from caring for their families.

CHN supports repeal of laws and other policies at the state and local level that criminalize homelessness and poverty--such as laws that prohibit loitering, nuisance, begging, sleeping on sidewalks, sleeping in vehicles, and other status offenses that disproportionately impact homeless individuals, many of whom live with mental health conditions or other disabilities.

CHN supports legislation that restores voting rights to currently and formerly incarcerated persons at the federal level.

CHN supports stronger gun violence prevention laws and programs to prevent the senseless violence that continues to threaten children's safety and the safety of our communities, with a focus on non-punitive community-based violence prevention and intervention models that treat violence like a public health issue.

CHN supports expanded use of home confinement and compassionate release as alternatives to incarceration for people behind bars who can safely be released.

Executive Branch

The Coalition on Human Needs supports protecting basic government services and functions essential to public safety, infrastructure, and well being.

CHN supports nominees showing a dedicated commitment to faithfully implement laws that protect the civil and human rights of low-income and other vulnerable people, and exhibit strong personal integrity and ethical standards and are free of conflicts of interest. Nominees and appointees must reflect the diverse identities and experiences of this country, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability status, class, and religion and belief system. Judicial nominations should also take into account the professional expertise of attorneys, and prioritize nominations for judgeships from among those who have represented workers, labor unions, consumers, people living with disabilities, voting rights litigants, people involved in the criminal-legal system, immigrants, or civil rights plaintiffs. CHN will, at its discretion, scrutinize nominees' qualifications and support or oppose individual nominations where warranted.

CHN supports efforts to protect and expand the United States Postal Service, including safeguarding the Universal Service Obligation, high quality and timely service, and use of USPS to provide other basic federal services such as passport applications.

Protecting our Democracy

The Coalition on Human Needs supports requiring full transparency of money in politics, including disclosure of the sources of funds for political campaigns and lobbying expenditures and increasing accountability of corporate spending through shareholder oversight.

CHN supports ensuring that all eligible citizens can freely exercise their right to vote and have their vote counted; this includes efforts to strengthen enforcement and oversight components of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and the Freedom to Vote Act, including over jurisdictions not originally covered by the VRA that have enacted voter suppression laws, and to restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated citizens.

CHN supports creating small-donor matching programs and citizen-led campaign finance systems which elevate the voices of small donors. Such reforms enable candidates to run effective and competitive campaigns using only small donations combined with matching funds and improves transparency around donors.

CHN supports requiring independent commissions to carry out the redistricting process so politicians cannot choose their constituents using big data.

CHN supports statehood for the people living in the District of Columbia.

CHN supports codifying the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), a bipartisan ethics office that helps monitor and report on ethics issues involving members of Congress with a proven track record of enhancing transparency and enforcement of ethics rules and has gained widespread support among the American public.

CHN supports Lobby Disclosure Act reforms to increase reporting and transparency.

CHN supports continued federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, to ensure continued independent news, public affairs, and educational radio and television programming, which in many areas provides the only access to local journalism and coverage of government decisions affecting people with low incomes.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes attempts to present states with citizen voting age data instead of the full count of persons conducted in the decennial census, which would lead to unfair under-representation of communities of color, people with low incomes, and children. CHN supports apportioning seats in the House of Representatives among the states by counting the whole number of persons in each state, as required by the 14th amendment.

CHN opposes legislation that would create barriers to the right to vote. Examples include, but are not limited to: photo identification requirements; restricting the use of tribal IDs for voting purposes; laws requiring voters or voter registration applicants to provide documentary proof of citizenship; laws limiting early voting opportunities or vote by mail options; proposing widespread precinct closures and/or consolidations; and laws purging qualified voters from registration rolls.

Addressing Environmental and Climate Threats

The Coalition on Human Needs recognizes that environmental and climate threats, while affecting everyone, disproportionately harm people with low incomes and communities of color, as well as people with various health conditions.

The Coalition on Human Needs supports the United States continued membership within the Paris Agreement on climate change, and strengthening carbon pollution standards.

CHN supports increasing the regulatory authority of the federal government to prevent or abate environmental health hazards and **supports** strengthening existing federal agency environmental justice strategies that direct agencies to identify and address the disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions on minority and low-income populations.

CHN supports the use of federal resources and agencies to deploy proven clean energy solutions; create millions of family-supporting and union jobs; upgrade our energy, water, wastewater, transportation, and transmission infrastructure; and develop and manufacture next-generation technologies to address the climate crisis.

CHN supports fully funding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), including restoring or expanding funding to ensure that overburdened and historically disenfranchised communities are protected.

CHN supports legislation or efforts to strengthen Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act standards and protections, including efforts to expand science-based decision-making and EPA's use of the best available health science in setting standards and protections.

CHN supports fully funding the Land and Water Conservation Fund to increase resources for conserving public lands and waters, to increase equitable community access to nature, and to incentivize voluntary conservation efforts on private lands, including through private-sector ecosystem markets.

CHN supports a federal commitment to language access for all non-English-speaking communities to ensure they are properly informed of community health and safety information, can participate in public meetings, and can make their voices heard, especially on issues affecting their families.

CHN supports a bold and much-needed shift in the way environmental policy is created with bold actions to protect and invest in the health and safety of frontline communities. We need a new process that prioritizes the voices of communities most harmed by environmental degradation and strengthens communities' right to hold polluters accountable in court when polluters' actions result in a discriminatory impact.

CHN supports policies to improve the affordability of investments in safe wastewater and drinking water infrastructure with federal assistance targeted to low-income communities.

CHN supports the restoration of protections for irreplaceable public lands and waters. We **support** the reduction of methane and carbon pollution from the energy sector.

CHN supports protections for national monuments. **CHN also supports** banning new oil and gas permitting on public lands and waters, modifying royalties to account for climate costs, and establishing targeted programs to enhance reforestation and develop renewables on federal lands and waters.

CHN supports investments to create millions of family-supporting and union jobs in clean energy generation, energy efficiency, clean transportation, advanced manufacturing, and sustainable agriculture across America. **CHN also supports** the investment in the education and training of underrepresented groups, including people of color, low-income Americans, women, veterans, people with disabilities, and unemployed energy workers for jobs in clean energy-related industries, especially union jobs that provide strong opportunities for economic advancement.

CHN supports energy-saving upgrades to up to two million low-income households and affordable and public housing units, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and promoting safe, healthy, and efficient homes.

CHN supports a federal commitment to assist low-income communities in protecting their residents from health and safety threats due to environmental hazards, whether natural or human-made, both in the form of funding and regulatory oversight of private and public sector entities.

CHN supports increased federal funding to detect, track, abate, and treat lead poisoning and lead hazards. **CHN supports** updating the HUD and EPA guidelines and standards related to the lead-dust, lead-soil, lead-paint, lead-water testing and clearance standards to protect health. **CHN supports** increasing incentives, penalties and enforcement mechanisms for addressing lead hazards and other environmental conditions dangerous to health.

CHN supports funding for the removal of lead service lines in low-income communities, as well as investments in education around the threat of lead in drinking water systems and the need to use filters to protect families from lead exposure through the water coming out of their tap.

CHN supports efforts to ensure that impacted communities and local governments are notified in a timely manner of the release of unregulated toxic contaminants, that polluters are held accountable for contamination, and that funds are provided to the affected states for clean-up and to test for all potential pathways of exposure (i.e. in water, soil, food, etc.).

CHN supports continued efforts to phase out the use of toxic and highly polluting chemicals in consumer products, such as PFAS chemicals (also known as “forever chemicals”), TCE, PCE, and others.

CHN supports efforts to strengthen EPA’s standards that protect our nation’s farmworkers and pesticide applicators from chemical exposure and poisonings.

CHN supports efforts to strengthen federal EPA protections from toxic coal ash. The siting and disposal of coal ash disproportionately and adversely impact people’s health in low-income communities and communities of color.

Consumer Protections and Homeownership

The Coalition on Human Needs supports access to fair, safe and affordable financial products and services and effective consumer protections so that consumers can build assets and lead successful financial lives. **CHN opposes** practices that are unfair, deceptive, discriminatory or abusive or that undermine economic stability.

CHN supports reforming the financial system built on inequality to advance policies that support wealth-building in Black, Latino and other communities that are disproportionately impacted by wealth extraction and discriminatory practices that bar access to the financial system in order to close the racial wealth gap.

CHN supports efforts to advance racial justice and equity in the financial market, and **CHN opposes** discriminatory lending and financial services practices and policies that directly or indirectly perpetuate exclusion and segregation. In addition, **CHN supports** federal legislation to protect LGBTQ people from discrimination to ensure that future Administrations do not exclude LGBTQ people from protections against discrimination on the basis of sex.

CHN opposes predatory lending (lending that is unaffordable or leads to a cycle of debt), and financial products and services that amplify inequality by targeting lower-income and vulnerable families and communities including communities of color with exploitative prices and fees or high interest rates. **CHN supports** vigorous enforcement of fair lending laws.

CHN opposes predatory conduct in higher education, that causes students to enroll and take on unaffordable student loan debt to attend low-value programs.

CHN supports the reform of broken student borrower income based repayment and relief programs – income-driven repayment and Public Service Loan Forgiveness – that have failed to deliver relief to many of the low-income borrowers who need them most.

CHN supports a 36% federal interest rate cap that covers all lenders and types of credit, with a lower rate cap for larger loans, and opposes measures that enable high-cost lenders to evade federal or state lending laws and interest rate limits.

CHN supports rules and other efforts to ensure access to safe, fair, affordable and sustainable mortgages, credit cards, auto loans, student loans, small dollar loans and other forms of credit.

CHN supports efforts to ensure access to financial services for immigrants, including borrowers with limited English proficiency, and to provide opportunities for consumers to receive and provide information in consumers' preferred language.

CHN supports access to safe and affordable bank accounts, prepaid cards, mobile payments, electronic payments, remittance services and other transaction products and services, including through public institutions like the Postal Service. **CHN supports** reforms to stop abusive overdraft fee practices and to protect consumers from overdraft and other excessive or inappropriate fees. **CHN supports** transparency, free access to account information, and competition and fairness in banking and transaction services. **CHN supports** effective measures to resolve disputes, errors or unauthorized charges and to control who accesses consumers' accounts. **CHN supports** greater consumer protections for people who have been defrauded or hacked, efforts to prevent and remedy fraud, measures to ensure that both newer and longstanding payment methods are safe, and effective remedies for consumers who have been harmed.

CHN supports measures to protect consumers with respect to crypto-assets, to require that all forms of payment comply with consumer protections, and to prevent fraud and theft involving crypto-assets.

CHN supports measures to ensure that data and reports kept about consumers are fair, accurate and up to date; to ensure consumers easily correct errors, and to promote fair and just treatment by data holders such as credit reporting agencies. **CHN supports** measures to eliminate the impact of racial disparities, medical debts and rental debts in credit reports, and to limit their use in tenant screening, employment, and insurance. **CHN supports** efforts to ensure the use of artificial intelligence, big data, algorithms, machine learning and other technology do not result in disparate impacts that harm communities of color or other protected classes. **CHN supports** ensuring that trans and nonbinary people who change their legal names are able to quickly and easily update their names on all of their financial and government records, including credit reports **CHN supports** measures to ensure that financial data is kept private, that consumers have greater control over their data, that when they give permission to access their data it is not used for other secondary purposes, and data is used only for appropriate purposes that do not disproportionately harm vulnerable or communities.

CHN supports efforts to ensure that working families can get, keep, insure, and use a reliable car at fair, affordable and unbiased terms, with transparency and consistency in car sales and finance.

CHN supports increased financial education and policies that encourage savings as helpful steps in promoting long-term economic security.

CHN supports equitable access to the courts to pursue violations of the law and an end to forced arbitration in consumer finance agreements.

CHN supports fair treatment of consumers who owe debts and the opportunity for second chances and a fresh start. **CHN supports** programs that work with consumers to save homes, to modify mortgages, auto loans and other types of loans, reduce or cancel student loans, and to access affordable repayment plans. **CHN opposes** unfair, deceptive or abusive debt collection practices. **CHN supports** limits on garnishments, offsets and debt collection with reasonable statutes of limitations to ensure that consumers have sufficient funds to pay for necessities. **CHN supports** fair bankruptcy laws, access to bankruptcy to achieve a fresh start, and the ability of bankruptcy judges to modify mortgages and discharge student loans. **CHN opposes** deceptive, abusive or fraudulent debt settlement, credit repair, loan modification or foreclosure rescue practices that exploit vulnerable consumers and leave them in a worse position.

CHN advocates for a strong, independent, and adequately funded Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and efforts by other federal, state and local agencies to protect consumers. **CHN opposes** any attempts to weaken the CFPB, including by ending its dedicated funding, changing its organizational structure from a single Director to a Commission, or removing or weakening its powers.

The Coalition on Human Needs opposes measures to make it more difficult for agencies to adopt and enforce consumer protection laws and rules to protect consumers. CHN supports the role of states in protecting consumers and addressing emerging problems and opposes preemption of state consumer protections, including through legislation, banking or other regulations or federal charters.

Combating Systemic Racism in our Society

The Coalition on Human Needs supports examining the funding, structure, and outcomes of both current federal policies and programs and proposed legislation to ensure that the inherent bias of racism in our society is addressed. CHN supports the collection of comprehensive and disaggregated data to accurately assess the impact and effectiveness of policies and programs on different racial and ethnic groups.

CHN supports establishing one or more commissions to study the enduring legacy of U.S. slavery and systemic racism and to develop proposals for redress and repair harms caused by these systems, practices and institutions.

CHN supports the reinstatement, expansion, and prioritization of racial equity/ Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training within the government, as well as within all government contracts.

CHN supports requiring the participation of people of color and other marginalized community members affected by policy proposals in government decision-making, as these communities are often further marginalized when policy choices do not directly address circumstances that disproportionately affect them.

CHN supports anti-racial profiling laws to prohibit profiling based on race or ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity and expression, and sexual orientation.

CHN supports policies that make it easier for marginalized communities to have fair and equitable access to full participation in our democracy, such as the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Act and the Freedom to Vote Act. **CHN also supports** protecting and enhancing existing voting rights, including but not limited to the right to vote by mail or dropbox, to have access to early voting options, and to be able to vote without long lines.

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General Consensus Statement

The positions in CHN's Public Policy Priorities document reflect the general consensus of member organizations on issues outlined in this document, but it does not necessarily reflect the specific position of all member organizations in every policy area.

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