URBAN LEAGUE
GREATER SOUTHWESTERN OHIO

STATE OF BLACK CINCINNATI
THE JOURNEY TO PARITY

par·i·ty

/ˈperədē/

the state or condition of being equal, especially regarding status or pay

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CINCINNATI:

A MICROCOSM

Our collective efforts to enhance the quality of life in Cincinnati, not only benefit our current residents but also significantly contribute to making the City of Cincinnati more appealing to newcomers. As we navigate the intricate landscape of Cincinnati's social fabric, it's imperative to recognize both the progress we've made and the challenges that persist.

Our city is not just a geographical location; it's a vibrant community built on the contributions of diverse individuals. Together, we must ensure that all members of the community have the resources they need to enjoy all that the Queen City has to offer.

In recent years, we have made considerable strides in welcoming and assisting those who are new to Cincinnati foster a sense of belonging and a feeling that they, too, can be a part of the greater community. Today, we have a more culturally competent spaces where Black professionals can gather, and enjoy our city.

Many people relocate to Cincinnati because of work and family. We want all individuals who call Cincinnati home to know that here you can meet and interact with great people. Cost of living in Cincinnati is 4% lower than the national average.[1] Cincinnati is home to a world-class zoo, extraordinary parks and green spaces, professional sports, and dozens of culturally rich museums that are fun and easily accessible.

With all of our city's great attributes, we cannot lose focus on the fact that we have a lot of work to do, to create an equitable Cincinnati, a place where everyone has the opportunity to realize their own greatness, a place where they can prepare their future generations for excellence all while living a fulfilling life.

At the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio, we are on a mission to disrupt generational poverty. Throughout this report, we will dissect the complex, interconnected factors that impact generational poverty among Black residents of Cincinnati. We have elected to take a data-driven approach to helping you better understand the various aspects of the Black experience in Cincinnati. Our approach allows us to accurately measure the impact of the collective efforts of the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio and our key community partners.

We, as an organization, acknowledge that we are not alone in doing this work. We hope to use this updated report as a compass that guides our community forward on the journey to parity. However, before we can move forward as a city, we must first acknowledge the past and recognize its role in our current state of affairs.

We begin our journey by clearly defining parity as it relates to achieving our mission and vision for the city of Cincinnati.

Parity represents a condition where power, value, and rank are evenly distributed. Throughout this report, we will use the term equity interchangeably with parity to describe the desired condition for everyone in Cincinnati. It is important that we point out that the term equality

CINCINNATI ISN'T UNIQUE IN ITS QUEST FOR EQUITY

carries a slightly different meaning and application than the terms parity and equity. Simply put, equality means that everyone has the exact same rights and resources, whereas equity refers to a state where individuals have the resources they need to be successful.

At the close of 2023, we decided that now is the right time to update our 2015 report "State of Black Cincinnati: A Tale of Two Cities," released under President and CEO Donna Jones Baker. Throughout this report, we will focus on data from 2015 to 2023 in a rigorous effort to shed light on the equities and inequities that continue to impact our community and challenge our efforts to achieve racial parity in the Greater Cincinnati region as we approach the 10 year anniversary of the Initial report in 2025.

As an organization, the Urban League of Southwestern Ohio has dedicated over seven decades to achieving equity in Cincinnati. Since our inception in 1948, we have been steadfast in our mission to help Black people and historically underserved communities achieve their highest social parity, economic self-reliance, power, civil rights and justice.

Although the data outlined in this report shows that we have made improvements in some areas, it also shows that we have a great deal of work before us to ensure that Black Cincinnatians can achieve true parity in all aspects of our lives. We invite you to accompany us on this journey and to walk forward with us in realizing this collective goal.

CINCINNATI: A MICROCOSM OF AMERICA

The information presented in this report focuses primarily on life in Cincinnati, Ohio, however, we want to be clear that Cincinnati is not unique in its quest for equity. Many of the challenges the Black community in Cincinnati has faced over the years, are common to the Black experience beyond our city's borders.

In an article published in February 2022 by the Cincinnati Enquirer, "Segregated Cincinnati: Why 1 in 3 people live in predominantly Black or white neighbor-hoods," Wendy Ellis, DrPH, shared about her grandparent's experience trying to purchase a home in Cincinnati during the 1960s. Dr. Ellis, now the Director of the Center for Community Resilience at George Washington University, summed it up perfectly as she stated, "Cincinnati isn't an outlier, it's actually a microcosm." 2

During the Great Migration, many southern Black residents migrated to areas like Cincinnati, Ohio during the 1920s and 1930s seeking respite from the Jim Crow South. These individuals uprooted their families in hopes of finding a better quality of life, better education for their children, and a higher earning potential, only to find that the standard of living in Cincinnati, Ohio for Blacks was only incrementally improved when compared to their lives in the rural South. In the South, sharecropping and other discriminatory practices were commonplace.3

When the Urban League of Southwestern Ohio was formed in 1948, the majority of Cincinnati's Black residents lived in the city's urban core, in densely populated areas, such as the West End neighborhood. At this time, laws that perpetuated systemic racism in housing, such as redlining, a legislative outcome of FDR's New Deal (1937) made it nearly impossible for Black residents to borrow funds necessary to purchase homes, maintain properties, and invest in predominantly Black neighborhoods.[4]

As a direct result of disinvestment, the housing stock in neighborhoods of color, like the West End of Cincinnati, was dilapidated and in disrepair. Paving the way for the destruction of a major housing community, Kenyon Barr, home to over 25,000 Black households in what the City of Cincinnati called "Urban Renewal."[5]

Cincinnati's Urban Renewal project wiped out an entire community for the expansion of the US Interstate Highway. The obliteration of homes and businesses in predominantly Black neighborhoods occurred throughout the country impacting communities of color from New York City, NY to Oakland, CA. It is estimated by the US Department of Transportation that 475,000 homes, impacting more than one million individuals, were destroyed due to the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956.[6]

The journey for Black people in Cincinnati, like those throughout the United States, has been marked with resilience, resistance, and recurring opportunities to work together for the common good. The Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio has stood in the trenches with communities of color fighting to achieve equity and equality in various aspects of their lives. Laws prohibiting housing discrimination marked a pivotal milestone

on our journey to parity.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 emerged from the midst of the civil rights movement's fervor. Its enactment represented a beacon of hope and progress for Black communities across the nation, including those here in Cincinnati. By prohibiting discrimination in housing practices based on race, color, religion, or national origin, the Fair Housing Act of 1968 sought to dismantle systemic barriers that prohibited access to housing for Black people.[7]

The passage of this legislation signaled a significant step forward in our pursuit of justice and equality. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 made it unlawful to refuse housing to a person based upon their racial compensation. It outlawed practices such as redlining and other discriminatory home lending practices. Educational outreach, mandated as part of The Fair Housing Act of 1968, sought to empower Black people including those residing in Cincinnati.[8]

However, as you will read in a later section of this report, simply declaring housing discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin, illegal did not eliminate all forms of housing disparities. However, it gave Black people a legislative stance in their fight for equity. In addition to giving Black people legal recourse against housing discrimination, The Fair Housing Act of 1968 continues to provide hope that equal access to housing and homeownership in Cincinnati is possible.

As we continued to work to desegregate housing in and around Cincinnati, it became evident that Cincinnati had fallen behind in our efforts to desegregate our local public schools. The 1954 Supreme Court ruling *Brown v. Board of Education* made it clear that segregated schools were

unequal and federal rulings required the integration of Cincinnati schools. However, in 1974 a federal lawsuit *Bronson v. The Board of Education of the City of Cincinnati* successfully claimed that racial isolation continued to plague our local public schools.9 As a result of the federal court ruling Cincinnati Board of Education agreed to lower its Taulbert Index, a metric used to measure racial segregation.10

In her role as the Chairperson of the Education Committee of the Cincinnati NAACP, Marion Spencer worked to organize plaintiffs in the Bronson case.11 Spencer's tenure as the Education Committee Chairperson of the Cincinnati Chapter of the NAACP spanned two decades. Marion Spencer continued to play a critical role in creating racial equity in Cincinnati. In 1983, Spencer became Cincinnati's first Black Councilwoman12 more than a decade after Theodore Berry Sr. served as the city's first Black Mayor in 1972.13

This decade-long gap is indicative that Black women face both racial and gender inequalities. Unfortunately, this is not unique to Cincinnati but is yet another microcosm. For example, Thurgood Marshall was the first Black man appointed to the United States Supreme Court in 1967.14 A Black woman did not receive such an appointment until 2022, a monumental gap of 55 years.15 Later in this report, we will further explore the vast challenges that Black women face in their quest for social parity.

The struggles faced by Black people in Cincinnati and our continuous efforts toward equity shine as a beacon of hope to Black people throughout the United States. Our challenges in the realm of police-community relations leading to the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement have been celebrated by policing districts throughout the country.

The Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement was signed in 2002 on the heels of civil unrest in Cincinnati sparked by the killing of unarmed Black men by White Cincinnati police officers. Outrage erupted in Cincinnati after the fatal shooting of Timothy Thomas in 2001. This landmark agreement made major strides to improve cooperation between Black communities in Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Police Department.16

In later sections of this report, we will dive deeper into the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement and the corresponding Refresh Agreement, signed in June 2017 by parties to the original lawsuit filed by the Black

United Front and American Civil Liberties Union against The City of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Police Department, and Cincinnati's Fraternal Order of Police.

As we set forth on this journey, our primary focus will be on the period beginning with the release of our 2015 report through the end of December 2023. These historical references were highlighted to show our ongoing commitment to achieving total parity, as well as highlight the tenacious spirit that lives with our Black residents, who despite centuries of racial discrimination, oppression and injustice have continued to press forward in their quest to achieve true parity.

In The State of Black Cincinnati: Journey To Parity we strive to update you on critical topics highlighted in our 2015 report and shed light on additional topics that have played a major role in the lives of Black Cincinnatians since the release of the 2015 report. For example, we have added an entire section to discuss the impact of COVID-19. In this report, we have expanded our Housing section to include a discussion about gentrification. We have also added two additional topics to the Health section of this report which highlight our increased awareness of Mental Health and Food Insecurity and the roles they play in our journey to parity. Furthermore, we have conducted an in-depth Inclusion study and have dedicated a section to our findings.

Each section will begin with a comprehensive report of findings. We will conclude each section with a focus on the work that we, and our community partners, are doing to eradicate racial inequity throughout Cincinnati.

Just as Cincinnati has served as a microcosm throughout the decades since the establishment of the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio, we hope that our work will also serve as a roadmap for communities of color throughout the country as they continue to strive for racial equity in their respective community.

Christie Kuhns, Esq.
President & CEO

MONEY MATTERS

The Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio ("Urban League") is working to disrupt the cycles of poverty that plague Black and historically underserved communities living in Cincinnati. Poverty affects all aspects of one's life from where they live, their health, and well-being which in turn impacts their ability to work and educate their children, thus increasing their vulnerability to discriminatory practices.

In Cincinnati, approximately 25% of the 297,000 inhabitants for which poverty was determined reported living below the poverty threshold in 2021. According to the US Census Bureau, these 73,400 individuals earned less than $18,867 during the 12-month period.

In 2021, 35.6% of Cincinnati's 125,400 Black residents were deemed living in poverty. Statistically, Black residents make up 40.6% of Cincinnati's population. However, Black residents accounted for the largest portion of the city's residents living in poverty.

For this same year, 19.8% of Cincinnati's Asian population and 16.5% of Whites in Cincinnati were considered living in poverty using the US Census Bureau's poverty threshold. The poverty threshold is a benchmark figure used to determine if someone is impoverished.

In our 2015 report, the figure used to analyze the cost of living for a family with one parent and one child was $42,331[17] For comparative purposes, the cost of living figure used for the same family size in 2021 was $71,700.[18]

As a direct result of the release of the 2015 report, several key community partners came together to form the Child Poverty Collaborative. Among this collective group were a broad range of social service agencies, including the Urban League, members of the Cincinnati business community and the City of Cincinnati. Together we worked to better understand the role that poverty plays in the life of Cincinnatians, especially that of impoverished children.

THE ECOSYSTEM OF POVERTY
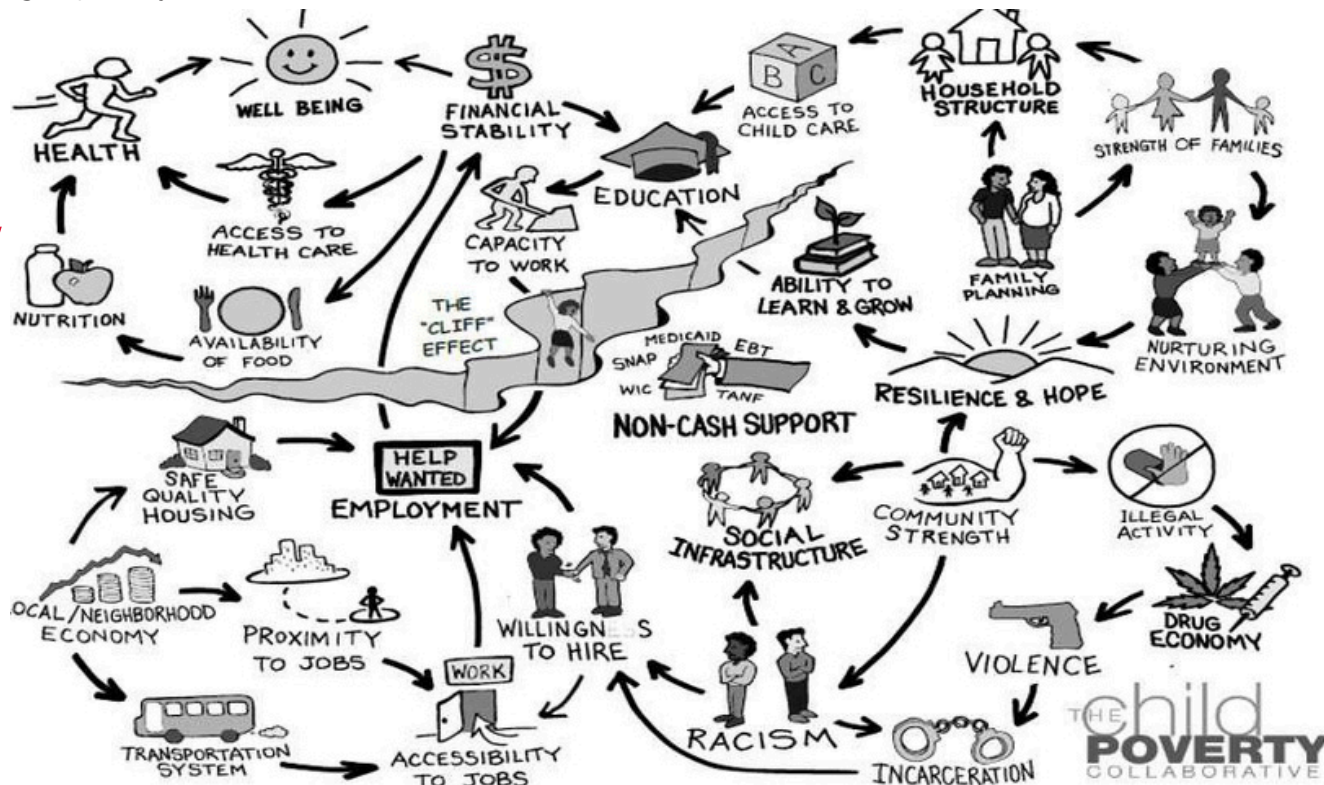
Source: University of Cincinnati. "Strategies to Reduce Poverty." https://www.uc.edu/content/dam/refresh/cont-ed-62/olli/22-winter/reduce%20poverty1.pdf

Several key factors, identified by the group, restricting impoverished individuals from achieving an acceptable standard of living include earning living wages, safe and affordable housing, healthcare accessibility, quality education, and protection from criminal justice discrimination. As we begin to assess the current status of life in Cincinnati around these topics throughout this report, it is imperative to understand the direct correlation between the amount of money an individual earns and their quality of living.

All things being equal, Black communities would be empowered to address the issues they deem most important. Black community leaders would be considered the subject matter experts around their lived experience, and individuals who have managed to lift themselves out of poverty would be seen as the standard to which other community members may aspire.

Under a more just and equitable distribution of wealth, Black individuals would be afforded the opportunity to pass down thriving businesses and properties abundant in equity to their future generations. Representation among influential power systems would better reflect the makeup of the population here in Cincinnati.

MEDIAN INCOME

To determine the median income for individuals living in Cincinnati, the US Census Bureau collects data from various sources. This income information includes wages, salaries, self-employment earnings, rental income, interest, dividends, and government assistance. The Census Bureau uses this information to determine the income distribution for a given population. They then divide the income into two equal groups, where half of the

population falls above the median income and the remainder below the median income for that population.

According to the US Census, in 2021 Black households made up 40.6% of all households in Cincinnati, approximately 145,400 households. In 2022, median income among Black households was reported as $31,520 compared to $70,909 for White households. Simply put, White households in Cincinnati made nearly 2.25 times the median income for Black households.[19]

The large income gap between the two racial groups is indicative of larger systemic inequities among Black and White households. As we explore this gap and the contributing factors restricting wealth accumulation among Black households, our goal is to identify opportunities to further tackle these disparities across our region.

From a broad perspective, the income gap between the two groups influences the Black community's ability to determine how their resources are utilized. Without equal wealth distribution, Black communities become subject to decisions around their well-being. The power and autonomy stripped from the Black community make it increasingly more challenging to address the issues that matter most to them.

Numerous studies have been conducted to better understand the role that America's middle class plays in the overall wellbeing of our communities. Most economists agree that it is nearly impossible to have a vibrant community without a thriving middle class. According to the Center for American Progress, a strong middle class promotes the development of a well-educated population, spurs entrepreneurial growth, and creates an
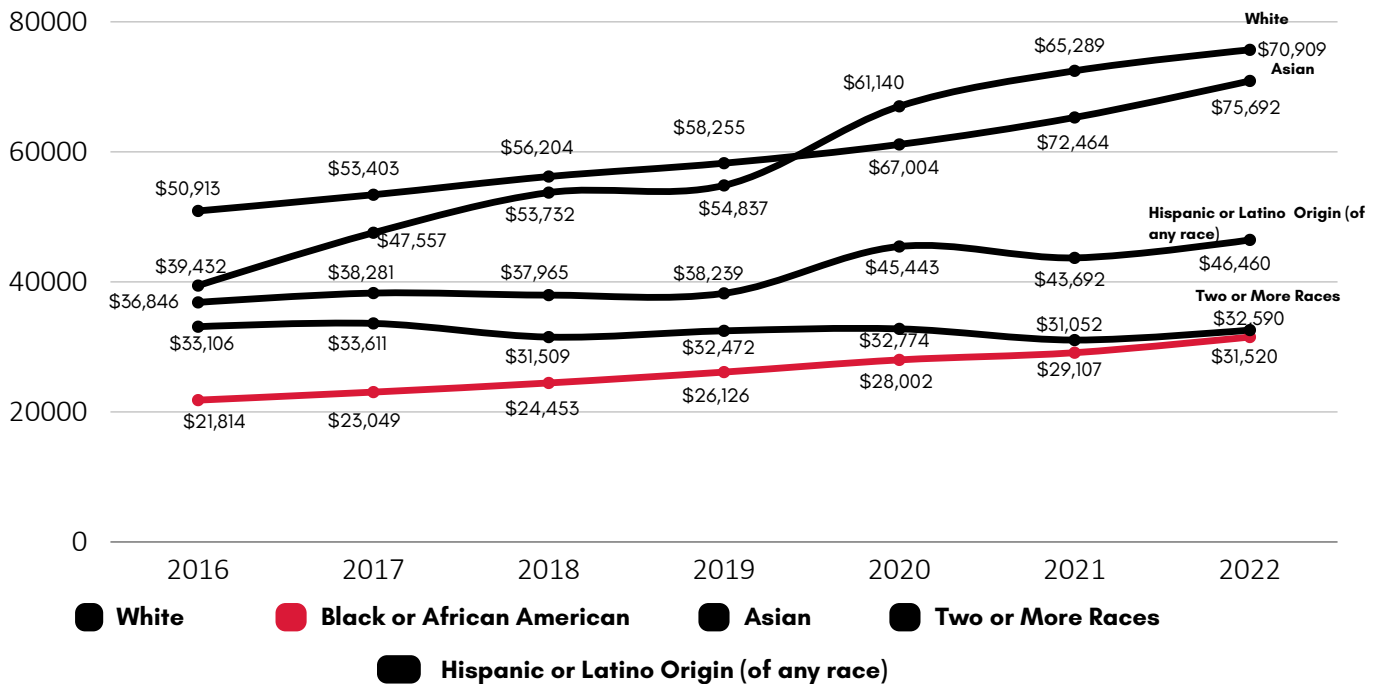
inclusive political system. [20]

Simply put, middle class spending is the economic engine of our community. Individuals with stable incomes are able to purchase consumer goods, supporting a wide variety of industries and businesses. MIddle class individuals purchase homes, invest in education and save for future generations.

Our efforts to increase income among Black community members support the growth of the middle class and further strengthen our local economy. Increased income among Black Cincinnatians would enhance their economic prospects as well as promote full social integration into addressing the issues that plague the City of Cincinnati. As individuals and families experience improved financial security, they are better equipped to participate actively in civic life, advocate for their rights, and contribute positively to the community's growth and development.

Black median household income has remained among the lowest for each year covered in this report. However, the rate of increase for Black households is continuing to grow at a slightly higher pace than other racial groups. For example, the 7-year rate of growth for Black households between 2016 and 2022 was 44.5%. The rate of income growth for White households for the same period was 39.3%. It is important to note that even with this modestly higher rate of increase, White households have a significant head start. In this example, the 2016 median income for White households was $50,913 whereas Black households began this period with a median income of $21,814.[21]

Many factors appear to contribute to this median income growth among Black households in Cincinnati. Among those factors, is the collective investment in human development by the Urban League and our community partners. In the

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY RACE & ETHNICITY IN CINCINNATI, 2016 - 2022 (ADJUSTED FOR INFLATION)

White — 2016: $50,913; 2017: $53,403; 2018: $56,204; 2019: $58,255; 2020: $61,140; 2021: $65,289; 2022: $70,909

Asian — 2016: $39,432; 2017: $47,557; 2018: $53,732; 2019: $54,837; 2020: $67,004; 2021: $72,464; 2022: $75,692

Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race) — 2016: $36,846; 2017: $38,281; 2018: $37,965; 2019: $38,239; 2020: $45,443; 2021: $43,692; 2022: $46,460

Two or More Races — 2016: $33,106; 2017: $33,611; 2018: $31,509; 2019: $32,472; 2020: $32,774; 2021: $31,052; 2022: $32,590

Black or African American — 2016: $21,814; 2017: $23,049; 2018: $24,453; 2019: $26,126; 2020: $28,002; 2021: $29,107; 2022: $31,520

Legend: White · Black or African American · Asian · Two or More Races · Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. "Table S1903: Median Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2021 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars).

following section labeled ULGSO Work Toward Economic Parity, we discuss how our various educational and skill-building programs assist those living in poverty by increasing their earnings potential.

UNEMPLOYMENT TRENDS

For the purpose of this analysis, we will be looking at unemployment rates from the period of 2016 to 2022. At the beginning of this period, Cincinnati was experiencing double-digit unemployment rates. The 2016 rate of unemployment in Cincinnati was 10.5%. The unemployment rate has declined each year since 2016. The 2022 rate of unemployment of 6.5% was 4% less than the 2016 rate.

Although joblessness among Cincinnati's workforce has significantly decreased, we must consider other factors when assessing the employment-related disparities limiting Cincinnati's growth. We will begin this leg of the journey by exploring the compilation of Cincinnati's unemployed workforce.

Let's begin by looking at race and the unemployment rate among Cincinnati's

Black and White residents. At the beginning of the focal period, Black workers were experiencing nearly three times the rate of unemployment experienced by White workers. In 2016, unemployment among Black workers was 18.7% whereas unemployment among White workers was 6.4%.

Over the 7-year period, the rate of unemployment among Black workers decreased from 18.7% to 11.2%. White workers in Cincinnati experienced a more modest decline from 6.4% to 3.9%. Even with an accelerated rate of decline, the rate of unemployment for Black workers was still almost 100% higher than their White counterparts as of 2022.

Another form of economic disparity is brought to light when we start looking at the variance in unemployment rates among male and female workers. In Cincinnati, 6.5% of male workers experienced joblessness in 2022 compared to 6.4% of female workers. While female workers were more likely to be employed, the number of females living below the poverty threshold was significantly higher.

POVERTY BY GENDER IN CINCINNATI, 2022

According to the US Census Bureau, in 2022, 41,646 women, including all races, were living below the poverty threshold. This is 27% of all women living in Cincinnati. For the same year, 32,252 men were living in poverty. This is 22% of all men living in Cincinnati.

Gender	Number Below Poverty Level	Total Population Living in Poverty	Percent Below the Poverty Level
Male	32,252	143,301	22.5%
Female	41,646	154,176	27.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Status" American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The disadvantages suffered by Black women workers are exacerbated by both gender and racial disparities. Black women must overcome wage inequalities due to their gender as well as workplace racial discrimination. These factors further limit the Black woman worker's ability to earn a fair living wage and to achieve career advancement. A 2020 study conducted by Lean In and McKinsey Global Institute showed that the number of Black women promoted to leadership roles across 590 US corporations was a mere 5 Black women per 100 men promoted. The number of Black women hired directly into leadership roles across the same companies was 64 per 100 men.[23]

Joblessness during the COVID-19 pandemic increased in communities throughout the United States. States experienced spikes in unemployment claims during the pandemic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate in Ohio reached 16.5% in April 2020, the first full month following the issuance of Ohio's Stay At Home Order.[24] Although stay-home orders were lifted in May 2020,[25] the rate of unemployment did not return to pre-pandemic figures until March 2021, a full year after the first COVID-19 case was reported in Ohio.[26]

Unfortunately, the decline in unemployment rates did not have the desired effect on lifting local residents out of poverty. According to the 2022 Hamilton County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the economic recovery in the region has exhibited disparities, with low unemployment rates failing to translate into significant wage growth. The report highlights, "Wage stagnation is keeping many from feeling the recovery." The report goes on to state that 40% of the expected 50,000 jobs created in Hamilton County between 2014-2024 are low-wage healthcare and food service jobs.[27]

SALARY, EMPLOYMENT AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

As we journey further into the economic factors surrounding Black workers in Cincinnati, we are reminded that the Black experience in Cincinnati is a microcosm of life in America. One clear indication of such is the enormous disparity related to the annual median salary earned by Black and White workers. The term "median salary" is used by the US Census Bureau to define the midpoint salary earned by individuals in a particular job category, industry or within an organization.

A 2021 report published by the McKinsey Institute for Black Economic Mobility and The McKinsey Global Institute indicates that the wage gap between Black workers and White workers in the United States is $220B annually. The report goes on to expose the causation of this gigantic gap. According to the report titled "The economic state of Black America: What is and what could be," the primary contributing factor is the overrepresentation of Black workers in low-wage occupations. The report uses US Census data to show that nationwide, 43% of Black workers are employed in occupational categories that pay $30,000 per year or less.28

An article published by Local 12 in 2022 shows that wage gaps exist in Cincinnati as well. According to the article, the annual median salary of City of Cincinnati employees is $67,536. While Black workers employed by the City of Cincinnati make up 35% of the city's workforce, only 24% of the city's Black workers had an annual salary above the median salary reported. The data shows that 71% of the city's White workers receive an annual salary that is above the median salary.29

Further exploration of the data, compiled by Scribd, shows that Black firefighters and White firefighters received comparable salaries. The same held true for Black accountants and White accountants employed by the city. The data shows that Black workers are not paid less than other races for equivalent positions, but that fewer Black workers are hired into higher-paying positions resulting in wage disparities among City of Cincinnati workers.30

The 2021 McKinsey report highlights additional risk factors that could have major implications on the future jobs of Black workers. According to the report, approximately 6.7M Black workers currently hold roles that could be subject to disruption by 2030. Many job-disrupting factors were listed in the report, among the top contributors are automation, the use of artificial intelligence along declining demand due to post-pandemic shifts in consumer behavior and business models. The report adds that not all of the workers in these positions will lose their jobs, but these monumental shifts mean that many will need to move into different roles.31

In the Cincinnati area, the leading sectors in terms of employment opportunities are healthcare and social services which combined account for nearly 150,000 jobs. Government jobs account for approximately 128,000 jobs and manufacturing jobs account for 114,500 jobs. When we compared the data provided by Lightcast, we found that Cincinnati, when compared to similarly sized cities, has a higher than average number of manufacturing, finance and insurance, transportation and warehousing jobs.32

ECONOMIC MOBILITY IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Upward mobility among Black people is a win/win situation for both individuals and for economic growth in our region. Therefore, we must strive to empower individuals to transform their financial situation and remove barriers that make upward mobility more challenging. In doing so we can create a thriving Black middle class, reduce financial strain on city resources and improve the quality of life for all Cincinnatians.

While the cost of living in Cincinnati is

lower than the national average, we still have some areas that need improvement if we want to make economic parity a reality for all. According to Payscale, Cincinnati's overall cost of living is 4% lower than the national average. Payscale shows that our housing and utility costs are 19% and 7% lower respectively. Transportation costs, however, are 11% higher than the national average.33

High transportation costs make it increasingly difficult for Cincinnati's low-wage workers to get to and from higher-

opportunities to address racial wealth inequality among Cincinnati residents. The survey compared the responses of Cincinnati's Black residents to a sample population that was representative of the city's population mix as of the 2020 Census.34

According to insights gleaned from the City of Cincinnati Financial Freedom Survey, several key barriers obstruct the upward mobility of Black residents. Foremost among these obstacles are limitations in educational attainment,

paying jobs. As we strive to increase upward mobility, it is imperative that we address such barriers systemically. Concurrently, we must actively increase financial literacy, and equip the workforce with skills tailored to higher-paying job opportunities, while specifically targeting these efforts toward Cincinnati's working poor, enabling individuals to sustain their economic advancement.

As recent as 2022, the City of Cincinnati published a survey looking for

financial constraints inhibiting further educational pursuits, and considerable challenges pertaining to transportation.

Moreover, the survey highlighted disparities in banking experiences between Black respondents and their counterparts representing the broader Cincinnati populace. 45% of Black respondents reported grappling with high banking fees, compared to 38% of the sample group. These exorbitant fees slow down the Black residents' ability to save and limit their capacity to effectively accumulate wealth.

Furthermore, another distressing revelation surfaced regarding the absence of emergency savings among the majority of Black residents. A striking 62% reported not having a rainy-day fund or savings earmarked for unexpected expenses. In contrast, 44% of the sample group found themselves in a similar predicament. This absence of a financial safety net increases the vulnerability of Black residents in the face of unforeseen financial emergencies.

Compounding these challenges, Black residents encountered disproportionately higher rates of denial when applying for credit cards and bank loans, standing at 40% compared to the sample group's 30%. The higher rate of denial increases the catastrophic impact of unexpected financial costs, putting Black residents at higher risk for financial hardship than the general population group.

DIGITAL LITERACY

Another key component to helping increase economic mobility is increased access to information and increased digital literacy. Increased access will ensure that individuals can get connected to resources that lead to their economic well-being. 2020 data shows that fewer Black households in Ohio had broadband access than did White households. Nearly 90% of White Ohians were connected to online resources through broadband access, while close to 17% of Black households lacked connectivity.35

This gap between internet connectivity among various groups is known as the digital divide. Without dedicated access to modern information communication technology, Black households had less access to information, educational resources, healthcare, and work-from-home opportunities, especially during the height of the pandemic. It is equally important to ensure that individuals know

how to utilize connected devices to fully experience the benefits of connectivity.

The Center for Community Solutions shared information from the US Census Bureau and Center for Disease Control (CDC) to highlight the drastic increase of internet usage during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. In their article "Exploring The Digital Divide" they reported, "Nearly 93% of households engaged in online learning with their children at some point during the pandemic and telehealth use skyrocketed."36

Heightened awareness around the disparities caused by the digital divide led to federal funding to be allocated toward helping increase connectivity among low-income households. The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program was launched in December 2020.

This temporary relief effort was created to discount the high cost of broadband internet access for income-eligible households. The Emergency Broadband Benefit program was later replaced with the Affordable Connectivity Program in late 2021.37

Upward mobility is challenging and the data shows that it is even more difficult for Black people to move from very low or low income levels to high income levels. In Hamilton County, 2018 data around upward mobility showed that only 2% of Black people who reached high income were from very low income families compared to their White counterparts whereas 12% achieved such mobility. Additionally, only 6% of high-income Black people were from low-income families, compared to 18% of White people.38

Centuries of deliberate policies aimed at hindering Black upward mobility have

entrenched systemic barriers, making economic parity elusive for Black individuals. The term "Black tax" has been used to explain why, despite increased earnings, Black individuals continue to lag behind other racial groups in wealth accumulation. A 2020 whitepaper, authored by economists Troup Howard and Carlos Avenancio-León and published in the Washington Post, scrutinized over a decade of tax assessment and sales data for 118 million homes across the United States, revealing entrenched patterns of housing discrimination. Their analysis revealed that Black homeowners shoulder a 13% higher tax burden compared to their White counterparts in similar scenarios.[39]

Beyond elevated tax obligations, the Black tax manifests in various forms, compounding challenges for middle- and upper-class Black individuals striving to build wealth. A 2012 study published in Social Forces underscores this by revealing that Black individuals are more likely to provide informal financial support to members within their network compared to White individuals.[40]

Consequently, the cumulative effect of these added financial burdens, coupled with familial expectations, strains Black individuals' capacity to attain economic parity. As a result, Black individuals must allocate more resources and energy towards addressing these obligations further hampering their ability to cultivate wealth.

Black individuals looking to lift themselves out of poverty through entrepreneurial endeavors often encounter challenges as they strive for upward mobility. Brookings Institute looked at some of the challenges that Black business owners face in their 2022 report, "Black-owned businesses in U.S. cities: The challenges, solutions, and opportunities for prosperity."

In their report, they used 2019 data from the Federal Reserve Bank that indicated there were 732 Black-owned businesses in Cincinnati. However, these businesses accounted for only 2% of employer firms, demonstrating that most of the Black-owned businesses were non-employer firms.[41] As a result, the scalability and revenue growth of Black-owned businesses is restricted.[42]

The number of Black-owned businesses appears to be growing, a more recent article by Spectrum News indicated that

there were 1,000 Black-owned businesses in Cincinnati as of 2020. According to the Spectrum News article, these Cincinnati-based Black-owned businesses employ 6,000 workers and contribute over $2.1B to the local economy.43

Nationally, Black-owned businesses continue to struggle to obtain the capital they need to grow. The US Chamber of Commerce reported that less than 1% of venture capital funds were distributed to businesses with Black founders in 2022.44

The data surrounding the economic circumstances of the Black community in Cincinnati underscores the urgent need to break the cycles of poverty that have inhibited wealth accumulation and advancement for communities of color. However, amidst these challenges, it also reveals a glimmer of hope – a tangible indication that achieving true economic parity is not an elusive dream but an attainable reality within our grasp.

Delving into this data enables us to catalyze meaningful dialogues about how, as a collective community, we can dismantle centuries-old structures of systemic racism and economic disenfranchisement. It serves as a roadmap guiding us towards actionable strategies aimed at fostering inclusive prosperity for all.

In the subsequent section of this report, we will dive into the impactful initiatives we at the Urban League are using to propel forward the economic trajectory of Black residents of the City of Cincinnati. By showcasing this work, we aim to inspire and empower others to join the cause, amplifying our momentum toward equitable economic advancement.

ULGSO WORKS TOWARD ECONOMIC PARITY
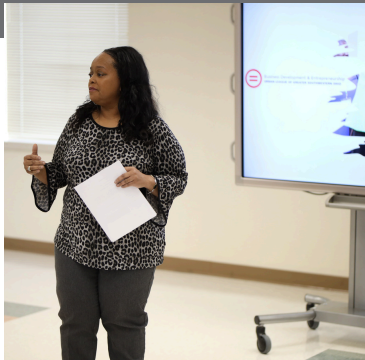
The Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio ("Urban League") continues to invest in building Cincinnati's human capital through intentional programming and initiatives focused on building and strengthening the Black middle class in Greater Cincinnati. Our efforts to solidify economic mobility among Black residents are central to our mission of increasing self-sustainability. Our evidence-based approach continues to raise the earning potential of Black residents through skills training, education, and comprehensive support.

Throughout this section, we will introduce the program offerings available through the Urban League and explore how these offerings play an impactful role in helping our community. We believe that Black economic mobility is vital to the overall economic stability of Greater Cincinnati. A thriving Black middle class contributes to our community by supporting local businesses, investing in education, and actively participating in civic activities.

Through our commitment to providing resources and opportunities for individuals and families to enter and advance within the middle class, the Urban League is helping break cycles of poverty and creating pathways to a brighter future for future generations.

WORKFORCE EMPOWERMENT

The longest-running workforce development initiative at the Urban League is our Solid Opportunities for Advancement & Retention (SOAR) program. SOAR was established in 1998 to strategically address obstacles impacting individuals from marginalized groups who suffer from chronic unemployment.

At its core, SOAR helps individuals with job training and professional skills development.

Additionally, SOAR helps address and remove barriers to employment impacting the lives of community members who are unemployed and underemployed. We use real-time labor market data to expose SOAR participants to career opportunities in high-demand fields.

While working with an employment specialist, SOAR participants are encouraged to explore their career interests. Participants learn marketable and employable skills. Furthermore, we assist participants with obtaining professional credentials and trade certifications to ensure their long-term career stability.

SOAR is delivered in 2-week-long cohorts with monthly graduations. Career coaches work one-on-one with individuals to teach participants skills including interviewing techniques, soft skills, and digital literacy skills necessary to thrive in today's connected workplace.

Each individual receives case management during and after their graduation from SOAR to help address challenges as they occur. Our Employment Specialists support individuals throughout their job search and beyond. Ultimately we want to help individuals secure and retain living wage jobs and careers where they can excel and thrive.

Throughout the years, we have learned that many factors can lead to a person experiencing chronic unemployment including lack of access to reliable transportation or childcare, as well as inadequate support for returning citizens or individuals with disabilities. Through SOAR's holistic approach to supporting the whole individual, the Urban League is preparing people to enter the workforce ready to reach their fullest potential.

"CCMEP is geared towards helping work-eligible young adults ready to use employment to break the poverty cycle"

In a locally broadcasted program, "Our Community Matters," Joseph Brundidge, a graduate of the Urban League's SOAR program, recounted how the program's training and support revitalized his self-confidence. "I had no belief in myself. When I chose a job, it was always mediocre, because I didn't think I could do better than that," he shared candidly. However, after engaging with SOAR, he gained the confidence to pursue opportunities and secured a position he previously considered beyond his reach.

Since the release of our last report, the Urban League has serviced 1,937 individuals through our SOAR program. Through our continued efforts we are playing a vital role in helping local individuals lift themselves from poverty and soar beyond their limitations.

Case management through the Urban League's Comprehensive Case Management and Employment Program ("CCMEP") is another example of how we meet individuals where they are and help uplift them and prepare them for upward mobility. CCMEP is geared towards helping work-eligible young adults ready to use employment to break the poverty cycle. This program supports low-income young adults receiving assistance through OWF (Ohio Works First) or TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) programs.

The Urban League, in partnership with Hamilton County Job and Family Services and Talbert House, provides comprehensive wrap-around supportive services to CCMEP customers transitioning from government assistance. In the past 9 years, the Urban League has supported 3,413 individuals with comprehensive case management.

CCMEP customers play an active role in creating a life for themselves and their young families leading them toward self-sufficiency. The service offerings available through CCMEP partnerships are customized to align with the individual and their unique journey toward long-term career success. These offerings include career coaching, job placement, educational support, transportation, childcare, and mentoring.

Educational support for young adults in CCMEP, ages 16 to 24, includes tutoring, teaching study skills, and addressing barriers to prevent dropping out. Additionally, CCMEP customers receive help accessing financial aid resources to cover training costs.

Making sure CCMEP customers can focus on bettering themselves, partner organizations support the customer with accessing reliable childcare. This invaluable support provides customers with peace of mind and assurance that their children are receiving quality care, allowing them to focus on obtaining employable skills that will lead to life-long success.

Mentorship and leadership development opportunities further prepare CCMEP customers for the journey ahead. These professional development resources fortify customers and increase their ability to address unfamiliar life experiences they may encounter along the way.

Customers who successfully complete the CCMEP program are enrolled in a post-secondary education program, enlisted in the armed services, or employed in a thriving-wage job. Beyond the skills they acquire, participants also gain access to a supportive network of community partners

dedicated to their long-term success.

For these brave individuals, tethering their dependence on public assistance resources such as TANF, and simply knowing that they are not alone as they travel into uncharted territory can make the difference between success and failure.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A commonly held belief is that leaders are not born, they are developed. This widely embraced notion underscores the belief that leadership is not an inherent trait bestowed upon select individuals at birth, but rather a skill set honed through experience, education, and determination. Consequently, it challenges the notion that leadership is exclusive to a predetermined few, asserting instead that anyone possesses the capacity to cultivate and wield effective leadership qualities.

The Urban League has been cultivating leaders for nearly 30 years through its African American Leadership Development ("AALDP") program. This 10-month professional development program helps individuals master their ability to influence change. Participants are empowered to tackle tough issues and use their newly-formed skills to transform challenges into opportunities.

A key objective of the AALDP is to increase African American representation in leadership roles in the public and private sectors. We invest in the betterment of our communities through the development of these individuals. As a result of our investment, more Black leaders are equipped to take on societal challenges that plague our communities and inhibit our efforts to reach total parity.

Participants in AALDP go through intensive training seminars and workshops focused on topics such as health & wellness, Cincinnati's rich cultural history, diversity, equity & inclusion, power & influence, black economics, human services, education, government & advocacy, and leadership. The facilitation of the training leads to self-discovery and heightened awareness of the role each individual plays in influencing change in our community.

Patrica Bready, an AALDP facilitator, and graduate of the program's inaugural class, shared profound insights into how the program significantly transformed her perspective. During the televised broadcast of "Our Community Matters", Bready shared how the Urban League has impacted her.

"The Urban League changed who I was, they changed how I watch the news, they changed how I talk to people, they changed how I accept information from other people and they most importantly gave me the facts to speak truth to power." - Patricia Bready, AALDP Facilitator and Class 1 Graduate

ZAKIYYAH THURMAN, MSN, RN, CMSRN
AALDP Class 29

Registered Nurse with over 20 years of experience, Zakiyyah Thurman, has dedicated countless hours to improving the health status of patients and families by providing proficient care & education. She has presented posters at national conferences and has been engaged in many quality, evidence based practice, and research projects. Zakiyyah owns her own business, ZIR Training Services, in which she provides educational training on communicable disease, child abuse, health & safety and first aid & CPR.

As I reflect on my experience of the AALDP program and the impact it had on my life, I utter the words, "what a difference ten months can make." This program moved me from a place of complacency to urgency. Just to reflect and think about my mindset prior to the program makes me truly conceptualize the stages my life has went through and the positive impact the experience has had on my thought process. It allowed me to meet great people and to take a deep dive within myself and awaken the leader buried inside me. Each person throughout this journey shared great wisdom that I will always remember and continues to fuel my ambitions.

Prior to the AALDP program, I was comfortable with my leadership. I was good with staying in my current position until I retired. After the cohort, I now know that what got me here, won't keep me here, and I need to continue to build a better leader within myself. This program inspired me to continue my education, in which I'm currently enrolled in the Executive MBA program at Xavier University with an anticipated graduation date of December 2024. I've recently accepted a new leadership position at work and I'm creating a leader within myself, that will continue to advance as opportunities arise. All these things that never crossed my mind prior to my AALDP experience and I'm forever grateful.

Bready uses her leadership skills to advocate for civic engagement, reminding participants that their voice is needed in the rooms where decisions are made. She encourages participants to engage "in the mix" and to share their truth. Accordingly, their participation leads to finding allyship and increasing the efficacy of their ability to solve big problems synergistically.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Supporting entrepreneurial expansion throughout Greater Cincinnati is one of the ways the Urban League directly impacts the earnings potential among Black residents in the city. Entrepreneurial endeavors allow individuals from disadvantaged groups to take charge of their own financial outcomes. The Urban League supports small business owners and operators through the various programs offered through our Business Development and Entrepreneurship department. In total, 9,192 business owners have received support from our Urban Leagues BD&E department since the release of our 2015 report.

The Economic Empowerment Center ("EEC")

"These initiatives equip community members with the skills, resources, education, and opportunities needed to thrive in today's marketplace"

serves the local small business community through training programs designed to increase the business owners' capacity, helping them achieve higher levels of success, resulting in job creation opportunities. Applying the GrowthWheel approach, the EEC helps business owners create an attractive business concept, build a strong organization behind their business concept, and develop lasting client relationships while maintaining profitable operations.

The EEC has partnered with major retailers to help expose small business owners to the latest innovation, information, and leadership concepts. These trainings are offered in multi-week cohorts, workshop series, seminars, and interactive sessions that focus on the critical aspects of entrepreneurship, such as business planning, market research, marketing strategies, financial management, and leadership development.

The African American Business Development Program ("AABDP") is the longest-standing training opportunity of the EEC. AABDP helps existing business owners accelerate their growth and enhance the stability of their business ventures. Graduates of the AABDP directly impact regional economic expansion as they increase employment opportunities throughout our community.

The Hamilton County Small Business Development Center ("SBDC") is a partnership between the State of Ohio Department of Development, the US Small Business Administration, and the Urban League. The SBDC housed at the Urban League offers local business owners no-cost, in-depth, one-on-one business coaching. Services offered at the

SBDC are provided by Certified Business Advisors who work directly with local founders to secure business capital, conduct market research, and prepare their businesses to operate in the global marketplace.

Leveraging resources, expertise, and community networks, the SBDC equips individuals with the tools and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of business operations. Through their direct support, SBDC Advisors help business leaders create legacy enterprises. The impact of their efforts creates a supportive ecosystem where entrepreneurs thrive, businesses flourish, and the economy prospers.

NEW INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

The Urban League has created several new economic initiatives to support individuals on their journey to economic parity. These initiatives equip community members with the skills, resources, education, and opportunities needed to thrive in today's marketplace. Furthermore, they serve as evidence of our adaptive approach to addressing the growing needs of the Cincinnati community.

Launched in 2020, our Financial Empowerment Center is among the new initiatives of the Urban League. The Financial Empowerment Center ("FEC") plays a pivotal role in empowering low- and moderate-income families helping them achieve financial stability and prosperity. This initiative extends beyond mere financial management; through this program, we strive to enhance the overall well-being of families by facilitating pathways to increased net worth and long-term financial security.

FEC provides personalized guidance and support, assisting individuals in navigating the

complexities of the financial landscape, enabling them to earn more while retaining a greater portion of their earnings. Additionally, through the FEC we cultivate saving habits and asset-building strategies, laying the groundwork for sustainable economic advancement and upward mobility.

At the FEC, our approach is holistic, recognizing that true financial empowerment entails more than just income generation. The Urban League is committed to fostering a culture of financial literacy and empowerment, equipping families with the tools and knowledge necessary to transcend financial challenges and seize growth opportunities.

While designed for the needs of our adult clients, we have expanded this offering to include the young adults who participate in our Urban Champions summer youth employment at the Urban League through our Credit Club. The Credit Club prepares individuals for sound use of credit and facilitates conversations about spending and saving at this critical stage of development.

In 2023, the City of Cincinnati embarked on significant infrastructure investments. In response, we launched Building Futures, a 12-week apprenticeship readiness program designed for unemployed and underemployed members of our community. Through our partnership with AFL-CIP, Hamilton County, Cincinnati Building and Construction Trades Council, TradesFutures, and the Ohio Department of Transportation, we are working to prepare community members for jobs in the construction trades.

Building Futures is tailored to meet the unique needs of Cincinnati's expanding construction sector, focusing on preparing individuals for high-demand careers in this ever-growing market. Beyond imparting essential construction skills, the program offers comprehensive life skills training and financial literacy education, equipping participants for a successful transition to middle-class living. Graduates of the Building Futures program seamlessly transition into registered apprenticeship programs, ensuring they continue to refine their expertise in high-demand construction trades.

In 2023, the Urban League partnered with Google to launch Black Women In Tech. This immersive training program worked to propel women of color in the tech sector. In addition to enhancing their technical skills, individuals who completed the 3 to 6-month training program receive coveted certificates to expand the participants' earning ability in high-growth, skill-demanding fields like IT support and data analytics.

The programs and initiatives provided by the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio align seamlessly with our core mission of fostering economic equity for marginalized communities, including Black individuals, and other disenfranchised groups. Our commitment lies in delivering impactful solutions aimed at narrowing the economic disparities prevalent among racial groups in Cincinnati. With the support from our community partners, our funders, and our key stakeholders, we are dedicated to enriching our community and paving a definitive path for individuals to actualize their fullest potential.

RACISM UN**MASKED**

HOW COVID 19 CHANGED OUR LIVES

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly impacted nearly every facet of our daily routines in ways never before experienced. COVID-19 shifted societal norms about work including where we work, how we work, and how we prioritize creating a harmonious balance between our work and personal lives. COVID-19 changed how we educate ourselves and our children. It drastically impacted our social lives and the value placed on creating memories with our loved ones.

It is without question that COVID-19 altered our thinking about physical and mental health, as well as how we access healthcare and mental health resources. A greater emphasis on e-commerce, coupled with major supply chain disruptions, changed how we shop for everyday products including groceries, personal care items, and takeaway meals.

Throughout this section, we will look at the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of Black people and disenfranchised groups. Using various sources of data, we will explore the many

racial and gender-based healthcare disparities illuminated during the global pandemic. Some of the topics we will highlight are directly related to health implications and COVID-19 vaccines, while other topics will center around lifestyle changes and challenges faced as a direct result of the pandemic.

Before COVID-19, the Cincinnati metro area reported the highest GDP of any metropolitan area that includes Ohio and Kentucky. GDP, or gross domestic product, is the total value of goods produced and services provided in a defined area. In 2019, the Cincinnati metropolitan area's GDP was $135.5 billion (adjusted for inflation), the 27th highest GDP of any metropolitan area in the United States.45

The economic slowdown that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a 3.6% decline in the Cincinnati area's GDP. This decline placed additional strain on the Black community. Many Black-owned businesses, already facing systemic barriers to success, were hit hard by lockdowns and restrictions. As a result, job losses and financial instability became even more

Cincinnati Region Year Over Year GDP Change
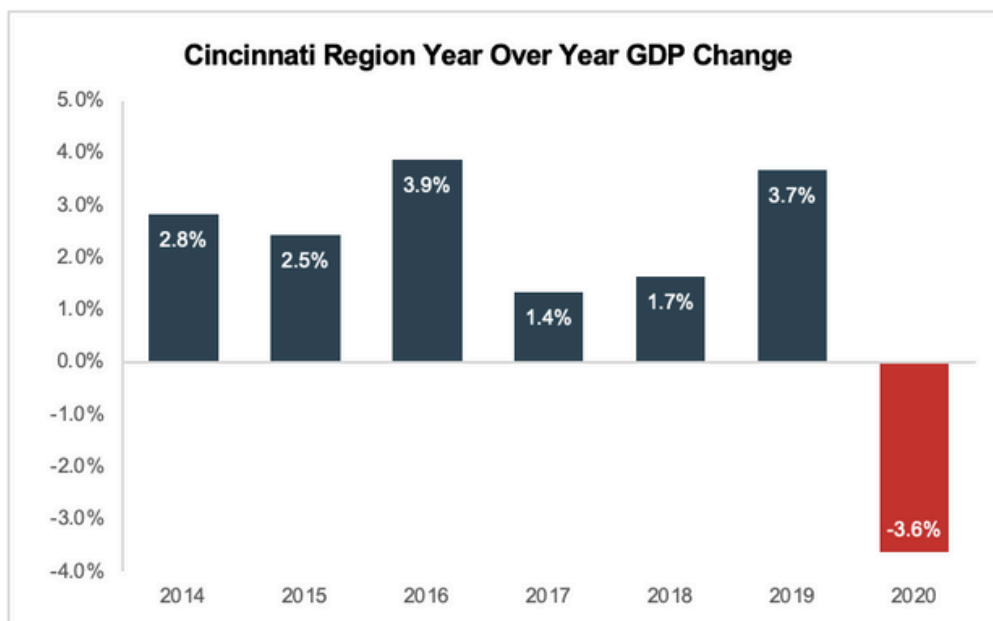
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Cincinnati metro area GDP

prevalent, deepening the economic disparities that disproportionately affect Black families.46

The economic impact of COVID-19 was not equally distributed among all industries. Certain industries were hit harder by the shutdowns, based on the nature of their business model. Across the board, industries reliant on tourism or in-person gatherings felt the impact of the pandemic profoundly. Among the hardest hit industries during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic were education, transportation, hotel and restaurant industries.47

The unemployment rate gap, or the difference between unemployed Black and White workers showed that job loss for Black workers happened more rapidly, while job recovery for Black workers was much slower than their White counterparts. For example, during the month of April 2020 in the United States, Black workers experienced a 17.2% unemployment rate, while White workers experienced a 14.6% rate of unemployment.

FIGURE 1.

Unemployment Rate Gap by Race, January 2020–August 2021
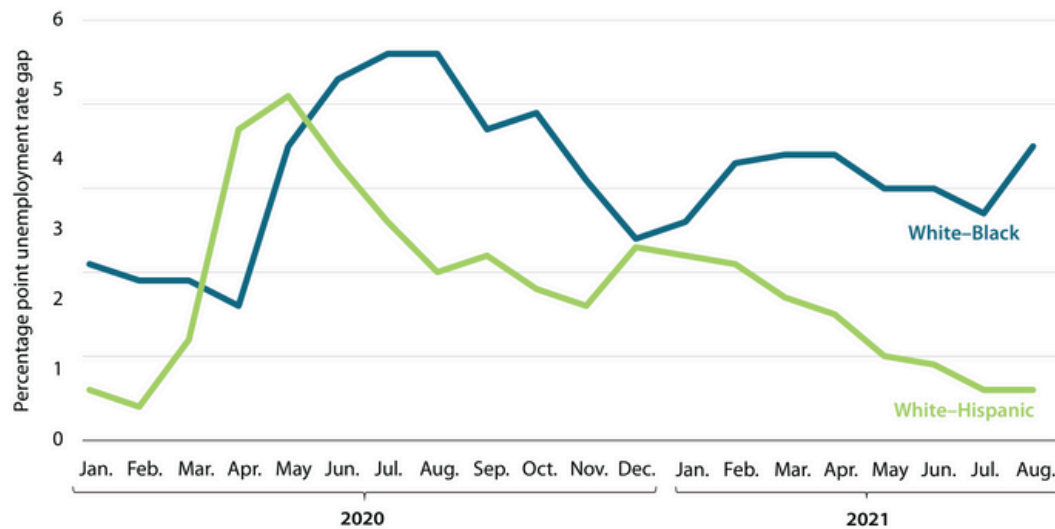
Source: Hamilton, D., Hardy, B., & Logan, A. (2021) The Way Back: What the Draft Recovery Legislation Means for Places and People in Need. Brookings Institution. page 2

According to a 2021 report from The Brookings Institution, "The Way Back: Assessing Economic Recovery Among Black Americans During COVID-19" using unemployment data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, reported that "The plateau in Black unemployment throughout summer 2020 is among the more important events in the labor market, with slower improvement relative to other [racial] groups through Fall 2020."48

COVID TIMELINE

Ohio had its first three confirmed cases of COVID-19 on March 9, 2020. Immediately Ohio's Governor, Mike DeWine, issued a state of emergency and warned that Ohioans would likely experience disruptions in their daily lives. At the time, the primary focus centered around individuals who were deemed high-risk, including the elderly, individuals with compromised immune systems, people with pre-existing health conditions as well as healthcare workers.49

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic after more than 118,000 confirmed cases in 114 countries and 4,291 COVID-related deaths.[50] In just a few short days, life as we knew it changed.

In Ohio, among the first major disruptions to our daily lives was the statewide closure of K-12 schools which began on Monday, March 16, 2020.[51] Parents throughout the state, without warning, had to figure out how to keep their children safe from coronavirus, while continuing to work and provide for their families. Initially, daycare centers and home care providers were allowed to continue operations under Governor Dewine's orders. In a study published in the American Journal of Cultural Society, Celso Villegas reported that Ohio was the first to issue a statewide school closure.[52]

Beginning March 23, 2020, Governor DeWine and Ohio Health Director Amy Acton signed Ohio's Stay at Home Orders which required Ohio residents to stay home except for essential activities such as obtaining food, medical care, or going to work in what were considered essential industries. Social gatherings were prohibited, and non-essential businesses were ordered to close. The orders also mandated social distancing measures and recommended wearing face coverings in public spaces. These orders also changed how Ohio daycares operated, requiring a new temporary license and placing greater restrictions on childcare.[53]

Ohio's Stay at Home Orders were replaced with the less restrictive Ohio's Safe At Home Orders on May 1, 2020, allowing non-essential businesses to begin operations.[54] The shift was communicated during DeWine's press conference held April 27, 2020.[55] DeWine's regularly occurring press conferences concluded on June 11, 2020.[56]

The first round of COVID-19 vaccinations in Cincinnati was administered on

Source: Ohio Governor's Office. (2020, December 4). COVID-19 update [Press release].

December 14, 2020, by UC Health.57 Frontline health workers who interacted directly with COVID-19 patients were among the first to receive a shot from the initial 975 doses of the Pfizer BioNtech vaccine.

According to DeWine's Vaccination Phase 1A, healthcare workers, staff and residents at various congregate care facilities, and essential workers such as Emergency Medical Service responders were first in line to receive the vaccine immediately following the FDA Emergency Use Authorization.58

The expanded availability of COVID-19 vaccines was administered to elderly members of the community beginning in January 2021.59 School personnel were added to the list of vaccine-eligible individuals on February 1, 2021.60 At the time, population-wide vaccines were not yet available so recommendations to wear face masks in public, maintain good hand hygiene, and practice social distancing continued.

State-sponsored mass vaccination clinics began operations on March 17, 2021, as vaccination eligibility increased to include adults.61 In May 2021, children ages 12-17 became eligible for the vaccinations.62 he State of Emergency for Ohio was officially lifted in June 2021.63 According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, initial FDA approval for vaccine use in children 6 months and older was not issued until late October 2021.64

COVID-INFORMED CHALLENGES

In late March 2020, Governor DeWine extended the statewide school closures through May 1, 2020.65 What started as an extended spring break for local youth, quickly became a crash course in how to educate children remotely. Educators, trained to facilitate in-person learning,

quickly found themselves grappling with the challenge of adapting classroom activities to distance learning platforms.

The move from in-person learning to learning through virtual classrooms exposed new challenges for parents and educators alike. According to the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, a nonprofit philanthropic organization that worked with various charitable organizations and business contributors to address the digital divide among students who attended Cincinnati Public School ("CPS"), one out of four CPS students did not have broadband access at the onset of the pandemic. They equated this to approximately 8,500 children who lost access to education as a result of COVID-19.66

To make matters worse, not all CPS students had personal devices. As discussed in the previous section of this report, Money Matters, the implications of the digital divide are complex as some caregivers have little to no digital literacy to assist young ones attempting to connect to the virtual classroom. The disproportionate number of Black households impacted by the digital divide placed local Black school-aged children at a learning disadvantage during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the press release by the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, households without internet access and students enrolled in Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) were offered a year of complimentary broadband service from Cincinnati Bell (now Alta Fiber) as part of the Connect Our Students initiative designed to alleviate educational disparities heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, the initiative strived to ensure that all CPS students received appropriate devices, such as iPads for students in grades pre-K

through 1st grade and laptops for older students, with 1,700 students equipped with these tools as of August 25, 2020.67

Beyond connectivity issues, learning remotely posed additional challenges for local students. Like their adult counterparts, Black school-aged children experienced heightened levels of stress brought on by COVID-19.

Students with caregivers performing frontline work were burdened with the additional stress around the potential health implications. The overrepresentation of Black Americans in these frontline roles, as highlighted in the Brookings Institution 2021 report,68 indicates that Black students were at higher risk for caregiver loss.

unsettlingly equal. As of August 25, 2023, Black residents in Cincinnati were diagnosed with 32,700 COVID-19 cases while the number of White residents diagnosed was only slightly higher at 33,000 COVID-19 cases.70

Federal, State, and local health data revealed an even greater disparity across the United States. Cumulative COVID-19 COVID-19 Age-Adjusted Infection Rates analyzed by KFF, formerly Kaiser Health News, showed that Black individuals were infected at a rate of 15,638.8 per capita which exceeded the number of White individuals infected, 14,858.4 per capita. KFF used data from 2020 through 2022 to perform their analysis.71

Another alarming trend exposed in the

"African Americans have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in every aspect, including higher death and sickness rates, greater losses in income." -Closing the Health Gap

As we will discuss later in this and subsequent sections, many Black children lack mental health support, forcing them to deal with higher levels of stress and insecurities that further inhibited these students' ability to learn. In a 2020 article from Axios, Patricia Hinchey, a professor of education at Penn State, was quoted saying "These are all things that are traumatizing kids," Hinchey says. "And kids cannot learn when they're under emotional stress. They just can't."69

HEALTH DISPARITIES

Infection rates among local communities of color unmasked health-related disparities. In Cincinnati, Black residents make up approximately 40% of the population, however, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases for Black residents and White residents were,

KFF analysis was the rapid rate of infection experienced by communities of color including Black individuals. With each resurgence, spikes in infection rates revealed that Black individuals had higher rates of COVID-19 cases early on, in both the Delta and Omicron variant resurgence. As each resurgence subsided, the infection disparities narrowed.72
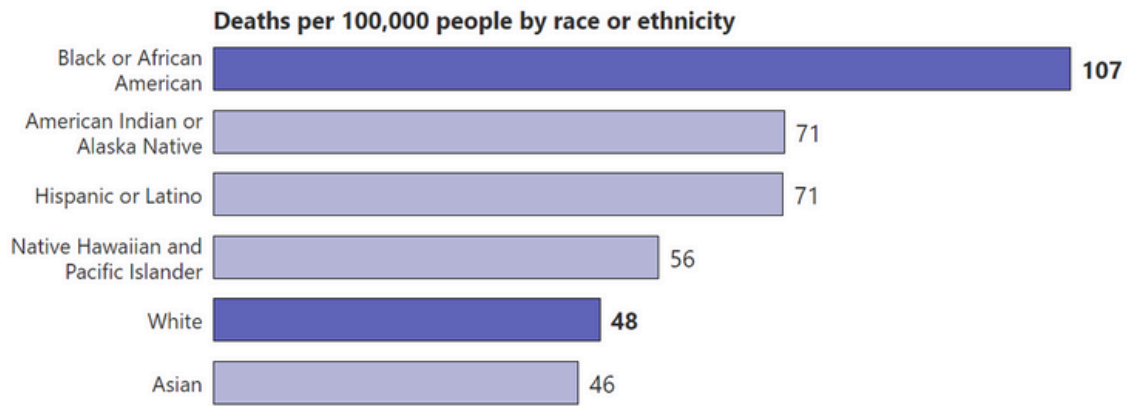
A 2021 report released by the Urban League's local community partner, Closing The Health Gap, reported a morbidity rate among Black individuals that was 2.2 times the rate of deaths among White individuals nationwide.

ECONOMIC DISPARITIES

Brookings Institution stated in their 2021 report that "Many Black Americans and their communities lack sufficient income

Nationwide, Black people are dying at 2.2 times the rate of white people.

Deaths per 100,000 people by race or ethnicity

Race or Ethnicity	Deaths per 100,000
Black or African American	107
American Indian or Alaska Native	71
Hispanic or Latino	71
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	56
White	48
Asian	46

Source: Closing the Health Gap. (2020). Health Disparities and the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Summary of the Impact on Communities of Color [PDF file].

and wealth to buffer both the job loss crisis and the economic crisis that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic."73

The lack of financial savings to cushion the blow of COVID-19 among Black Households is further evidenced by data released in the McKinsey report that indicated that Black households have one-eighth of the wealth held by White households. According to the McKinsey report, low-wage frontline workers are among the most severely impacted individuals as a result of the economic slowdown that stemmed from COVID-19.74

The McKinsey report cites Robert Fairlie's 2020 white paper, which analyzed government data on business activity from February 2020 to April 2020. Fairlie's paper, titled "The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Business Owners: Evidence of Early-Stage Losses," reveals that 41% of Black-owned businesses ceased business activity during the early stages of the pandemic. 75

In June 2020, Time Magazine ran an article that discussed the shortfall of government assistance to aid Black-owned businesses. According to the article, Black-owned businesses did not receive their fair share of Paycheck Protection and other COVID relief funds. As a result of this shortfall, Time predicted that it would be even more difficult for Black-owned firms to maintain operations during and after the pandemic.76

As we look closer as to how the pandemic impacted the financial well-being of Black residents in Cincinnati, we rely upon survey data collected by Closing The Health Gap. According to their 2021 Health Disparities + COVID-19 Report, Closing the Health Gap reported that nearly 50% of Black respondents indicated that they suffered economic consequences

from COVID-19.

The percentage of Black respondents who reported being unable to afford basic necessities including food, heat, or rent was approximately 30%. These survey results went on to support the theory that Black households did not have the savings to weather the impact of COVID as stated by the Brookings Institute and McKinsey report.

VACCINATION ROLLOUT

Ohio's vaccine rollout was conducted in phases. Theoretically, the phases were created to balance the high demand with the limited supply of vaccine doses. Unfortunately, the rollout resulted in vaccination disparities and Black residents were not being vaccinated at the proportionate rate. A March 2021 article published by The New York Times reported that Black residents in Ohio were not receiving an equitable number of COVID-19 vaccines.77

In these early phases of vaccine distribution, it became evident that more needed to be done to ensure equitable access. A March 2021 article published by the Cincinnati Enquirer was included in a nationwide study scrutinizing public health strategies addressing vaccination disparities. The 2021-2022 study was published in Public Health Reports, "Promising Practices for Ensuring Equity in COVID-19 Vaccination: The Devil's In the Details." The study praised the United Way of Greater Cincinnati for leveraging its 2-1-1 helpline to facilitate transportation for individuals facing accessibility barriers.

The study examined five common barriers that made it more difficult to vaccinate communities of color: Information, Physical Accessibility, Trustworthiness,

Technology, and Cost. Accessibility issues identified by the study include the location of vaccination sites, their proximity to public transportation, accessibility for individuals with health and mobility challenges, and hours of operations especially when those hours were deemed inconvenient for the population the clinic sought to serve.78

According to the March 2021 article by the Cincinnati Enquirer, Cincinnati's then Mayor, John Cranley wrote numerous letters to Governor Mike DeWine asking for an additional 2,000 vaccines per shipment and the removal of the age restrictions placed on vaccines at the time.79

UNDESIRED OUTCOMES THAT WERE UNVEILED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Some of the COVID-19 fallouts unjustly impacted women. As of August 25, 2023, 56% of Cincinnati's COVID cases were among women. Women represented 54% of those hospitalized due to COVID-related complications.80 In addition to higher rates of infection, women suffered higher rates of job loss during the pandemic.

The Center for American Progress reported, "Over the course of the first 10 months of the pandemic, women—particularly women of color—have lost more jobs than men as industries dominated by women have been hit the hardest." in February 2021. The article, "When Women Lose All the Jobs: Essential Actions for a Gender-Equitable Recovery," utilized Bureau of Labor Statistics data as evidence that job loss among women in non-farm occupations was significantly higher among gender lines.81

Another alarming statistic that was unmasked during COVID-19 was the

increase in gender-based violence. Women Helping Women reported a 23% increase in the number of clients from March 16 through June 30, 2020, compared to the same timeframe in 2019. The agency's analysis also showed calls to its hotline jumped 53% over the same 14 weeks when compared to the 2019 timeframe. In a July 2020 article published by the Cincinnati Enquirer, Kristin Shrimplin, Executive Director of Women Helping Women, indicated that in addition to the number of calls, assaults were increasingly more violent during this period. 82

Amid the pandemic, there was a surge in gun violence across the United States, with the Center for Disease Control identifying it as one of the indirect impacts of the crisis.83 In Cincinnati specifically, gun violence saw a notable increase during the initial ten months of 2020. Data analyzed by WCPO's I-Team from the Cincinnati Police Department revealed 82 homicides during this period, marking a 40% rise compared to the previous three-year average of 58 murders during the same timeframe.84

Stress, anxiety, and sadness related to COVID-19 were not equally distributed. 40% of Black households reported higher stress levels related to the pandemic, and

comparatively 30% of White households reported higher stress levels. An even wider mental health disparity between above-average-income households and low-income households was reported by Closing The Health Gap, 27% of above-average-income households reported high levels of stress compared to 45% of low-income households.85

Overall, there has been a decline in the rate of uninsured individuals in Cincinnati since our 2015 report. However, significant disparities persist, particularly among Black residents who are more likely to lack medical insurance compared to their White counterparts. According to data from 2018 to 2022, approximately 8.7% of Black residents in Cincinnati were uninsured, whereas the uninsured rate among White residents was estimated at 6.1% for the same period.86

These disparities underscore ongoing challenges in ensuring equitable access to healthcare coverage, particularly for those already facing economic hardship resulting from COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

COVID-19 exposed health inequities around the physical and mental health impacts of the disease and pandemic. In

the following section on health, 24.9, we will further discuss many of the preexisting conditions that deem a person to be at a higher risk for complications and death when they contract COVID-19.

In its 2023 report for healthcare professionals the Centers for Disease Control lists lack of insurance coverage as one of the contributing factors associated with race-related risk for severe cases of COVID-19.87

The ever-changing recommendations and resulting abrupt changes, designed to slow down the spread of coronavirus in an effort to protect public health and limit its impact on the healthcare system, altered life for every individual in Cincinnati. The use of personal protection equipment, such as face masks and hand sanitizing stations, became a common aspect of daily life.

The widespread adoption of antimicrobial hand sanitizer surged during the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed at curbing the transmission of the virus. However, despite these measures, they proved largely ineffective in addressing the pervasive spread of racism. Much like the insidious nature of the virus, racism remains deeply divisive and lethal. Its relentless propagation inflicts harm upon those it encounters, mirroring the destructive impact of coronavirus.

COVID-19 pulled back the mask that has covered systemic inequities affecting Black residents in Cincinnati. Racism existed before the onset of the first COVID-19 cases in March 2020. As the data shows, the pandemic has served as a magnifying glass. Exposing these inequities allows us to work together to create a healthier vision for Cincinnati where all residents have equal access to resources and support.

The Urban League with the support of our community partners has taken a strong stance against COVID-19. In the next section, we will share how our collective efforts are moving us forward on our journey to parity.

ULGSO TOOK A STRONG STANCE AGAINST COVID

"With over 70 years of experience supporting the needs of the Black community, the Urban League rose to the occasion to stand in the gap as a trusted Black-led organization"

The Urban League played a critical role in Cincinnati's COVID Taskforce, convened by our community partners at the Health Collaborative. We partnered with several community organizations to look at the health data, identify and address disparities and create systems to ensure that Black residents could access resources. Among our partners were Closing The Health Gap, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, YMCA of Cincinnati, UC Health, Sucasa and many more. With over 70 years of experience supporting the needs of the Black community, the Urban League rose to the occasion to stand in the gap as a trusted Black-led organization.

The Urban League tapped into our network of Black doctors and nurses who used their advanced knowledge to bridge communication gaps, explain the science behind coronavirus, and ensure that communities of color were not excluded from efforts to address COVID-19.

The Urban League began hosting educational forums, titled Coronavirus 101 on March 27, 2020. In the early days, especially when the information being disseminated was unclear and policies being implemented did not include integral aspects of the Black experience and nuances around serving Cincinnati's Black community, the Urban League hosted weekly informational sessions virtually. The regular cadence of our Black Educational Forums made them easily predictable, allowing concerned community members to come to the Urban League for the information needed to stay safe, reduce exposure, and educate themselves about the deadly virus.

As we discussed in the previous section, local

Black residents did not have the same level of internet connectivity as White residents. Therefore, we found it necessary to supplement our online efforts with boots-on-the-ground initiatives. Staff members, accompanied by members of the Cincinnati Black Nurse Practitioner Network, went out into predominantly Black communities to educate and inform individuals, encouraging them to stay safe during the pandemic. What began as a door-to-door outreach program expanded to include communal spaces such as barbershops and beauty salons, once these businesses were allowed to safely reopen.

As a critical aspect of our efforts, the Urban League and our key community partners worked to ensure local and state decision-makers understood our community's needs and advocated for more equitable policies and procedures. We advocated, wrote letters and asserted our influence to amplify the voices and needs of the Black community.

Collectively we used real-time data to inform which communities were most at risk for severe cases of COVID-19 and identify locations where individuals were lacking the support needed to keep COVID-19 at bay.

MASK DISTRIBUTION

Early in the pandemic, the limited supply of personal protection equipment ("PPE") was designated for use by healthcare workers. Worldwide demand paired with global supply chain disruptions made it increasingly more difficult for lay people to obtain the appropriate face coverings to prevent the spread of COVID-19.[87]

Altruistic individuals with idle time on their

"The Urban League took action to address the needs of the Black communities who needed face masks to perform essential functions like working and obtaining food for their families"

hands began producing homemade face masks using step-by-step instructions provided by the CDC. Typically these face masks were donated to health care systems to supplement the limited supply. An example of this can be found in a March 2020 article published by Cincinnati Business Courier, wherein Cincinnati-based Bon Secours Mercy Health System, put out a community-wide request for donations including homemade face masks.88

The Urban League took action to address the needs of the Black communities who needed face masks to perform essential functions like working and obtaining food for their families. The Urban League took a multifaceted distribution approach to get much-needed PPE supplies to people in need. We utilized our Community Outreach Advocates to help us distribute face masks. Furthermore, individuals were invited to pick up face masks from the Urban League's Avondale office. Through the Cincinnati Economic Empowerment Center at the Urban League, business owners were provided with kits, which included face masks and other forms of PPE, to aid in the business' reopening efforts.

COVID-19 TESTING SITE

Accessibility to testing is one of the barriers that increased the risk of death and complications among Black Cincinnatians from COVID-19. Before the Urban League opened up our centrally-located building to serve as a test site, people living in predominantly Black communities did not have equal access to COVID-19 testing. Our centrally-located offices are served by multiple public bus

routes making us accessible to individuals from various neighborhoods and Cincinnati suburbs.

The Urban League increased our hours of operation to make COVID-19 testing more convenient and accessible to working individuals. Our open-door policy made it easier for people to get tested without having to rely upon online appointment-setting software which posed additional barriers for individuals who lacked internet connectivity and the digital literacy to navigate those systems. As at-home COVID-19 test kits became available, The Urban League made them available to the Black community and included them in our kits for local small businesses.

COVID-19 VACCINATIONS AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Our collective efforts to drive policy that intentionally considered the needs of the Black community became increasingly important as COVID-19 vaccinations became available in late December 2020. As discussed in the section labeled Racism Unmasked, usage of initial batches of the vaccines was restricted to healthcare workers and then by age. Our data showed us that using age as a determining factor unjustly excluded Black residents.

The Urban League and fellow members of the Black Vaccination Group wrote letters to Ohio's Governor requesting that race be included as a determining factor of who could receive early doses of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Simultaneously, the Urban League worked to address vaccine hesitancy among the Black residents of Cincinnati through our Black Educational Forums and in partnership with Closing The Health Gap's We Must Save Us town hall-style virtual sessions. Together we leveraged the expertise of Black health practitioners to educate the community about the science behind vaccine development. Through these interactive sessions, we worked to address the concerns of Black residents to increase the number of Black people receiving COVID-19 vaccinations. These trusted healthcare providers used their influence to advocate for vaccine adoption in the Black community.

We applied what we had learned during COVID-19 testing to ensure that vaccination clinics at the Urban League were accessible and easily attainable. The HealthCare Connection served as our onsite provider and vaccines were administered by members of the Ohio National Guard. Additionally, our partners from the Black Nurse Practitioner Network were often onsite during vaccination clinics to answer questions. The Urban League staff made additional efforts to send vaccine reminders to individuals who received their first dose at the Urban League when it was time to get their second dose, boosting their protection against the latest strains of the novel coronavirus.

Using language that was inclusive and informative helped us reach at-risk members of the Black community. We also worked to make getting vaccinated a cultural experience. We solicited help from Cincinnati Music Accelerator to provide local

musicians who performed outside of our vaccination clinics. We even invited food trucks to help us create an atmosphere of togetherness centered around taking an active role in tackling COVID-19.

THE RESILIENCY FUND

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Urban League stepped in to support Black business owners by providing crucial capital and technical assistance. Despite initial rounds of federally-funded COVID relief missing many local Black-owned businesses, the Urban League, in collaboration with local government officials and the Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative, a hub for low-to-moderate-income entrepreneurs, intervened with multiple rounds of Resiliency Grants. These grants, tailored to different levels of need, served to bolster minority-owned businesses grappling with economic hardship stemming from the pandemic. Central to the Resiliency Grants was the provision of technical assistance aimed at helping these small businesses sustain their operations and implement strategies for long-term viability.

Through strategic initiatives, the Urban League facilitated the infusion of much-needed capital into the Black business community. A total of 144 small business grants were disbursed, amounting to a substantial sum of $1,078,500. These grants served as a lifeline for local business owners, enabling them to navigate the economic challenges posed by the pandemic and sustain their operations during unprecedented times of uncertainty.

The Urban League directly served 29,000 local individuals with resources and support. Our online outreach through social media reached over 150,000 individuals from March 2020 through October 2020.89

The pandemic exposed the stark racial inequities in resource allocation and information dissemination, yet it also illuminated the formidable force of unity among the Urban League's partners in confronting these disparities head-on. Recognizing the urgent need to address the amplified inequities, we rallied together, pooling our resources, networks, and advocacy platforms to combat the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on marginalized communities.

Despite the physical constraints of the shutdown, our commitment to safeguarding the lives and well-being of Cincinnati's Black residents never wavered. Through collaborative endeavors, we not only saved countless lives but also fostered greater resilience and solidarity within the community. Moving forward, the legacy of this collective response will continue to inform strategies for promoting health equity and social justice in the face of future crises.

24.9

At the Urban League, we recognize that achieving a good quality of life hinges upon eliminating health disparities. Health is not merely the absence of illness; health is the cornerstone upon which individuals build their dreams, families flourish, and communities thrive. Therefore, our commitment to addressing health disparities in Black Cincinnati is not just a matter of policy but a moral imperative, essential for fostering resilience, empowerment, and equity.

As we embark on this journey, we stand guided by the conviction that every individual deserves the opportunity to attain their highest state of well-being, irrespective of their race or socio-economic status. Sadly, in Cincinnati, there are stark differences in the health and well-being of its residents.

In this section, we delve into the health disparities among different demographic groups, echoing the sentiments expressed by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who famously proclaimed, "Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in health is the most shocking and inhuman."[90] The Urban League shares Dr. King's perspective, underscoring the urgent need to address inequities in healthcare access and outcomes.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

We will begin this leg of our journey by looking at the life expectancy of individuals from various groups throughout the City of Cincinnati. We will use life expectancy data to identify groups for whom the greatest risk of premature death exists. By analyzing the life expectancy data of various population groups we hope to shed light on why people with low incomes and certain racial and ethnic groups have lower-than-average life expectancies.

In general, the life expectancy for Cincinnati residents is 76.1 years old, according to City Insights which includes 2007-2015 data. The city-reported data shows that White residents are expected to live longer than their Black counterparts. Locally, the average life expectancy for Black residents is 71.6 years old while the average life expectancy for White residents is 74.8 years old.[91]

Further analysis of the city's life expectancy data shows that Black women are expected at birth to live 74.7 years, as compared to White women, who are expected to live 78.2 years. The variance between Black men and White men is even wider. The life expectancy at birth for Black men in Cincinnati is 66.5 years compared to 72.6 years for White men.[92]

The variance in life expectancy between Black residents and White residents has raised concerns among public health and government officials leading to local, county, and national organizations to declare racism as a public health crisis. By acknowledging and addressing racism as a determinant of health, legislators can create a more just and equitable landscape where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. This includes implementing policies to dismantle structural racism, promoting health equity through targeted interventions and investments, diversifying the city's healthcare workforce, and amplifying the voices of the Black community in decision-making processes.

In 2020, two local government agencies passed resolutions that explicitly call out the racial injustices that impact the life expectancy of this region's Black residents. In July 2020, the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners passed a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. In a news story published by

WLWT, the Board of County Commissioners states that "...racism in Hamilton County has created a health divide causing Black Ohioans to have lower life expectancies and other health complications than white Ohioans." The news story goes on to state that passing of this resolution empowered the Board of County Commissioners to "support and promote collaborative health efforts that reduce racial inequities in health."93

On August 5, 2020, the City of Cincinnati passed a resolution declaring racism as a direct cause of the shortened life expectancy of Black residents living in the City of Cincinnati.94 The declaration of racism as a public health crisis in Cincinnati signifies a community-wide commitment to addressing racial disparities and promoting health equity for all residents, particularly those from marginalized communities.

As we looked further into the Cincinnati Neighborhood profiles, it became obvious that racism is not the only "ism" that impacts the life expectancy of Cincinnati residents. This discovery came by comparing the Cincinnati neighborhood with the lowest life expectancy to the neighborhood with the highest life expectancy. At the neighborhood level, we

see that in Lower Price Hill the life expectancy at birth for residents is only 62.9 years. Comparatively, the life expectancy at birth for residents of Mt. Adams is 87.8 years. Statistically, residents from Lower Price Hill have 24.9 years shaved off of their expected life the moment they take their first breath.

This jarring discrepancy caused further exploration of the potential causes for this 24.9-year deficit. Using the Climate Equity Indicator Report we saw that the racial profile of each neighborhood was vastly different. Mt. Adams is a predominantly White neighborhood, the population of Mt. Adams consists of 94.1% White residents and 1% Black residents. Comparatively, Lower Price Hill is considered a mixed-race neighborhood. Lower Price Hill consists of 48.5% White residents and 35.3% Black residents, 2.1% Hispanic with 21.3% listed as other.

Beyond the racial makeup of these two distinct Cincinnati neighborhoods evidence that capitalism has had a major impact on the life expectancy and quality of life for individuals from each neighborhood appeared. Despite being approximately 5 miles apart, economically, these neighborhoods are worlds apart. The rate of poverty in Lower Price Hill is an

astonishing 72.1% whereas the rate of poverty in Mt. Adams is 4.5%.

Greater variances in the social determinants of health impacting these Cincinnati neighborhoods emerged as we explored further. According to the Climate Equity Indicator Reports, 56.2% of all housing stock in Mt. Adams is occupied by renters, however, only 11.4% of renters in Mt. Adams spend upward of 50% of their household income on rent and utilities. In Lower Price Hill, nearly 84% of its housing stock is occupied by renters, and 38.3% of Lower Price Hill renters spend upward of 50% of their household income on rent and utilities.

Furthermore, the data shows that individuals residing in Lower Price Hill have a higher risk of cancer incidents,95 higher risk of lead poisoning, and increased exposure to air and water pollution, all of which can weigh heavily on the health and physical well-being of Lower Price Hill residents.96

Lower Price Hill is considered an urban industrial neighborhood. Educational attainment among Lower Price Hill residents is among the lowest in the city.97 Decades of disinvestment have contributed to the economic, social, and infrastructural challenges faced by neighborhoods like Lower Price Hill throughout Cincinnati.

Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts to reinvest in the community, improve economic opportunities, enhance infrastructure, and provide access to essential services like quality health care. With the vast majority of Lower Price Hill residents renting their homes and more than a third of those renters spending the bulk of their income to cover basic housing costs, like rent and utilities, less of their income is available to pay for other necessities such as food and health insurance.

Alarmingly, the rate of individuals in Lower Price Hill without health insurance is 26%, nearly the highest of all Cincinnati neighborhoods. Of the 1,681 individuals who call Mt. Adams home, 4.8% lack health insurance. According to a Google search, there are more healthcare centers in Lower Price Hill than there are in Mt. Adams. While basic services are provided at Lower Price Hill healthcare centers, the nearest hospital is more than 4.5 miles away. There are multiple hospitals in close proximity to Mt. Adams residence, with the nearest hospital being a mere 2.0 miles away.

With its lower rate of Asthma, Diabetes, and Heart Disease, Mt. Adams residents are among the healthiest of all Cincinnatians, while residents of Lower Price Hill are at risk of having one or more of Cincinnati's leading causes of death, Heart Disease, Cancer, Accidental Deaths, Cerebrovascular Disease and Chronic Lower Respiratory Diseases.98

In a 2022 article originally published in Link Nky, Kate Shroder is quoted as saying "We see that the neighborhoods with lower life expectancy are more likely to be younger, have more residents who are Black or Hispanic, have less income, rent their homes and do not have a vehicle."99

Further exploration of the leading causes of death across Cincinnati reveals additional reasons for concern.

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASES

Cincinnati is not unique. When looking at the city's highest cause of death, cardiovascular diseases (or heart diseases) are the leading killer of Cincinnati residents. Nationwide data published in the Centers for Disease Control Fact Sheet

on Cardiovascular Disease using 2018-2020 data shows that across the United States cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in adults.[100]

For decades organizations such as the American Heart Association have been studying the rate of death by race and continue to warn us that mortality rates among Black people are the highest.[101]

In a scientific statement published by the American Heart Association, it was noted that "Population-wide reductions in cardiovascular disease incidence and mortality have not been shared equally by African Americans. The burden of cardiovascular disease in the African American community remains high and is a primary cause of disparities in life expectancy between African Americans and Whites."[102]

Local health data does show a decline in cardiovascular disease deaths from 2016-2020. In 2016, Cincinnati dashboard data reported 250.9 deaths per 100,000 residents, which was higher than the average of 206.5 per capita among other dashboard cities. In 2020, Cincinnati reported 233.4 cardiovascular disease deaths per 100,000 residents. This figure is still higher than other dashboard cities which had an average of 211.5 cardiovascular disease deaths per 100,000 residents in 2020. Over the five years, the rate of decline in cardiovascular deaths was 6.97%.

While the dashboard data does not include a racial breakdown of cardiovascular deaths for Cincinnati residents, the City Health Dashboard website, which compares health data across hundreds of US Cities, including Cincinnati does indicate that racial, socio-economic and geographical factors put people at risk of cardiovascular disease. "Black or Hispanic individuals, people with low income, or people living in the
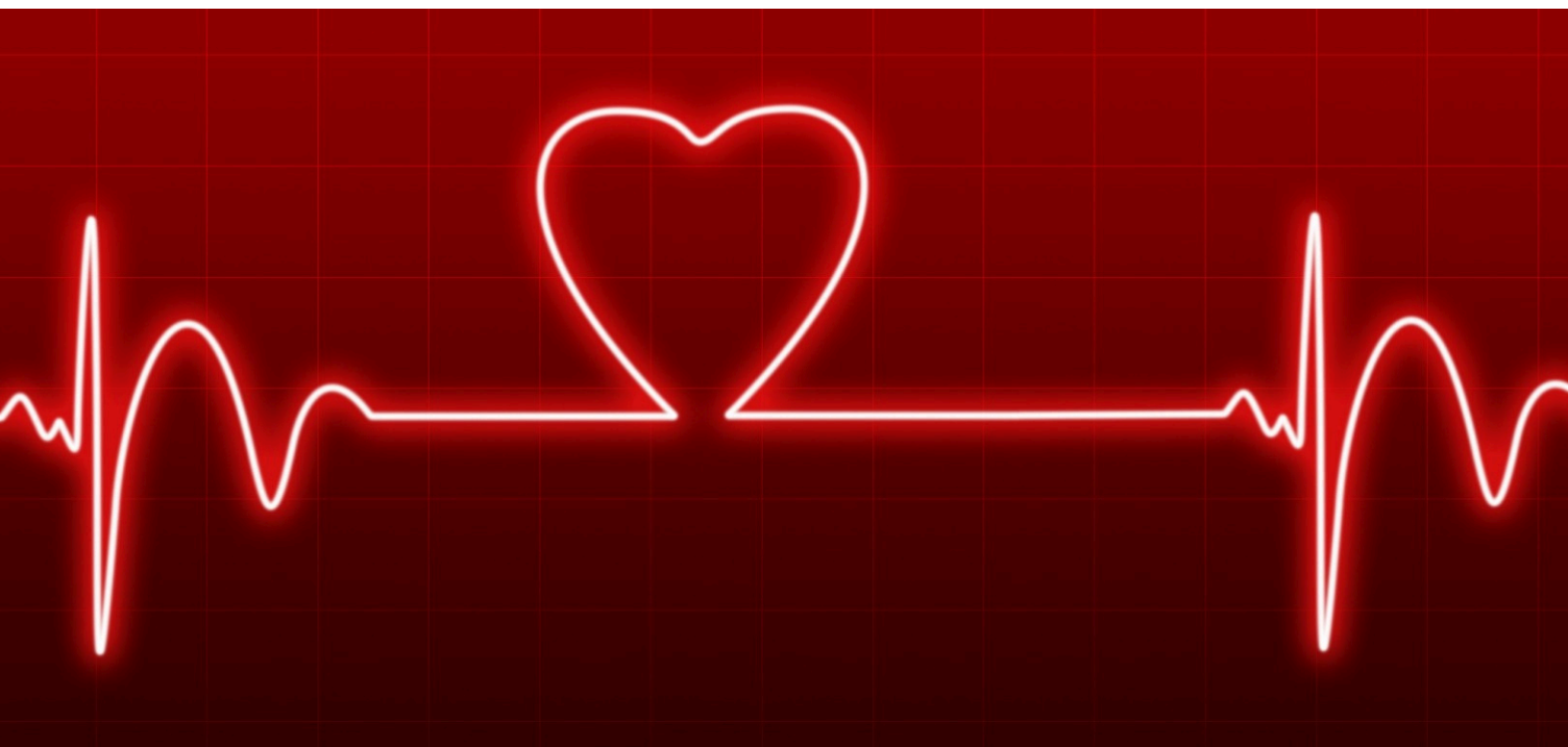
southeastern U.S. are all at higher risk of cardiovascular disease."[103]

CANCER INCIDENTS AND DEATHS

In America, Black people have the highest rate of cancer deaths. Likewise, Black people have the shortest length of survival among all racial groups.[104] According to a 2023 article published by Karen Bankston, PhD MSN in the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center blog using 2022 data from the American Cancer Society, the mortality rate among Black people with cancer is higher than any other race of people.[105]

In the blog article, Dr. Bankston provides a clear example of how racism and classism played a deadly role in the treatment of poor, indigent, local cancer patients, many of whom were Black. As recently as 1972, these local cancer patients were administered deadly doses of radiation at Cincinnati General Hospital (now UC Medical Center) as part of a research experiment funded by the US Department of Defense. Patients in the 1960 to 1972 research were not properly informed that they were given lethal doses of radiation, instead, they were told that the radiation would benefit their cancer treatment.[106]

In Hamilton County, the number of cancer incidents among Black residents for the period covering 2016 to 2020 is 462.1 per 100,000 residents. The rate per capita for White residents is 469.4.[107] The data reveals that the rate of cancer incidents in Hamilton County is comparable between Black and White residents. However, given that Black residents constitute approximately 26% of the county's population, this data is indicative that the risk of having a cancer incident is greater among Hamilton County's Black residents

The deeper we dive into health data between the two racial groups the more .

clear the disparities between the two racial groups become. In addition to having greater cancer risks, the identified risk factors for many of the deadliest forms of cancer include being a member of the Black race. A poignant example of this is among the risks of colorectal cancer.

In the United States, colorectal cancer is ranked as the second deadliest cancer. According to Colorectal Surgery Associates, "Black Americans are 20% more likely to get colon cancer than White Americans, and 40% are more likely to die."[108]

In Cincinnati, deaths from colorectal cancer are higher than the average of other dashboard cities. In other dashboard cities, the average rate of death from colorectal cancer is 14.9 per 100,000 residents. Here in Cincinnati, the rate is 18.6 deaths per 100,000 residents.

In Cincinnati, deaths from Breast Cancer are again higher than in other dashboard cities. In 2020, the morbidity rate in Cincinnati was 25.6 per 100,000 residents. Other dashboard cities experienced a lower morbidity rate from breast cancer, on average the other dashboard cities experienced morbidity rates of 23.6 per 100,000 residents.

Like colorectal cancer, being a member of the Black race is listed as a risk factor for breast cancer. Other risk factors include one's age, the age at which a young woman had her first menstrual cycle, delayed childbearing, shortened length of time breastfeeding, hormone usage, alcohol, and tobacco usage, having a poor diet, and lack of physical activity. According to the American Cancer Society, "Black women are 41% more likely to die from breast cancer than White women."[109]

In the United States, Black women are

3 times as likely to die from pregnancy-related issues. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 80% of all maternal deaths are preventable. The CDC attributes the risk of maternal death among Black women directly to structural racism and implicit bias toward Black women.110

The issues plaguing Black women have an equally alarming impact on Black babies. In Ohio, the infant mortality rate among the Black community is more than 2 times higher than the rate of infant deaths in the White community.111

In Hamilton County, the infant mortality rate is 14.78 per 1,000 live births for Black babies. The rate of infant death for White babies is 5.99 per 1,000 live births. These sobering statistics highlight the need to improve access to quality care for birthing parents and their precious babies. These disparities highlight the urgent need for equitable access to quality healthcare while simultaneously addressing the systemic injustices embedded within healthcare systems that perpetuate these outcomes.

THE COST OF SILENCE

Mental distress impacts all people with little regard to one's racial and ethnic background and across all socio-economic classes. According to an article published by McClean Hospital, "Black individuals experience mental health challenges at rates similar to other groups." The article goes on to point out that only 25% of Black people seek treatment for their mental health challenges, this is significantly lower than the percentage of White people who seek treatment, 40%.112 Thus 75% of Black people who face mental distress suffer in silence without the help and support of a trained mental health professional.

Throughout this section, we will examine the phenomenon of Black individuals enduring mental health challenges without seeking help and the ramifications of suffering in silence. By delving into the data surrounding this tendency, we hope to illuminate the profound implications of silence within the Black community, shedding light on the pervasive struggles that persist in the shadows of unspoken narratives.

As we begin to explore the reluctance among Black people to seek mental health treatment we are reminded that Black people in Cincinnati suffer a greater burden of economic hardship, these financial constraints coupled with stress specific to the Black experience put this group at a higher risk for severe mental health crises.

Furthermore, the data shows us that Black people in Cincinnati lack health insurance at a higher rate than White residents. According to the US Census American Community Survey 2017-2021, 8.4% of Black Cincinnatians do not have health insurance coverage.113 The lack of adequate coverage is but one of the many reasons why individuals do not seek help

in addressing mental duress.

The normalization of suffering and forced silence has left an indelible mark on the collective psyche of Black people. Historically, silence in the Black community can be traced back to centuries of slavery, segregation, and racial violence. During slavery, Black people were not considered sophisticated enough to develop depression, anxiety, or other mental health disorders.114

Even today, many members of the Black community equate silence with strength. A 2013 study published in Nursing Research reported that 63% of Black individuals believe a mental health condition is a sign of personal weakness.115 This stigma surrounding mental health issues can prevent individuals from seeking help, fearing judgment or ostracization.

Another commonly supported reason as to why Black people do not seek treatment for mental health disorders is the lack of culturally competent clinicians. Christine Crawford, MD MPH, is quoted in McClean Hospital's article, Black Mental Health: What You Need To Know as saying "the lack of cultural sensitivity by health care professionals, African Americans feeling marginalized, and the reliance on family, community, and spiritual support instead of medical or psychiatric treatment—even when it is critically necessary."

According to an interactive data tool published by the American Psychological Association in 2022 using 2020 US Census Data, only 4% of the psychological workforce in the United States is Black. Of this workforce, a mere 8% are Black males.116

Throughout the US, cities use data around frequent mental distress to evaluate the

economic hardship and overall well-being of the city's community.117

According to the City Health Dashboard, 18.3% of Cincinnatians reported having frequent mental distress in 2020. Frequent mental distress is defined as 14 or more days of poor mental health in the past 30 days. The average among dashboard cities was 15% in 2020.118

In 2022, our partners at Interact For Health conducted a study that included individuals from communities throughout Greater Cincinnati. The 2022 study showed that

Without appropriate treatment and support, untreated mental illness often exacts the most devastating toll on our community, leading individuals to pay the ultimate price: their own lives. Across the United States, suicide is the second leading cause of death among individuals 10 to 34 years old.120 In Greater Cincinnati, 1 in 4 young adults ages 18 to 29 reported frequent mental distress.

The tragic loss of life by suicide has a ripple effect that reverberates throughout our community. From shattered families grappling with unfathomable loss to

Greater Cincinnati adults reporting frequent mental distress, 2022

Frequent mental distress is defined as 14 or more mentally unhealthy days in the past month.
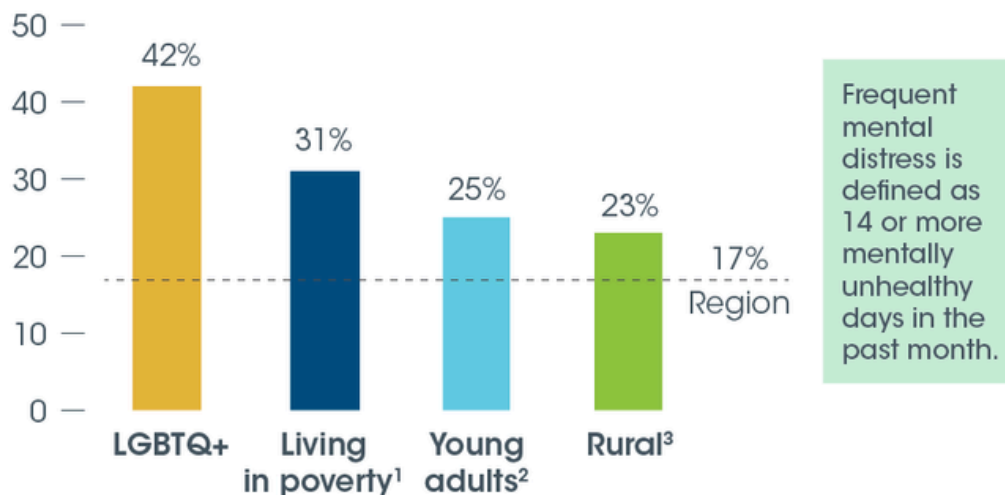
¹ In 2021, a family of four living in poverty (the equivalent of 100% or less of the Federal Poverty Guidelines) had a household income of $26,500 or less.
² Adults ages 18-29 years old.
³ Adams, Brown, Clinton and Highland counties in Ohio; Bracken, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Owen and Pendleton counties in Kentucky; Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley and Switzerland counties in Indiana.

SOURCE: Interact for Health. 2022 Community Health Status Survey. Interviews conducted Spring 2022.

Source: Interact for Health. (2022). Mental Health and Well-Being. Retrieved from https://www.interactforhealth.org/mental-health-and-well-being/

31% of people living in poverty reported frequent mental distress. The data shows that poor people in our region have nearly two times the amount of toxic stress caused by economic hardship.119

communities grappling with the aftershocks of grief and despair, the impact of untreated mental illness dramatically impacts our city's ability to flourish.

Suicide deaths are preventable. According to our partners at Cincinnati Children's Medical Center, 95% of suicide deaths occur among people who have depression or another diagnosable mental health disorder.121 A 2021 study published in the Journal of Behavior Health Services and Research shows that mental health treatment significantly reduces suicide attempts.122

In the Black community, Black males are at higher risk of suicide deaths. According to the US Department of Health & Human Services Office of Minority Health, the 2018 death rate from suicide among Black males was four times greater than the rate for Black women.123 Nationwide data shows that in 2020 suicide deaths were the 3rd highest cause of death among Black youth, ages 15 to 24.124

Working in collaboration with our local community stakeholders and creating safe spaces for individuals to obtain treatment for mental health disorders must remain a community-wide priority as Cincinnati works towards a future where every individual has the support and resources they need to thrive.

DYING OF HUNGER

Neighborhoods that lack healthy food options are considered food deserts. A neighborhood is determined to be a food desert if the neighborhood lacks proximity to grocery stores that sell reasonably-priced fresh produce and meats as well as the lack of residents' access to transportation. In Cincinnati, 25% of the population lives in neighborhoods without access to affordable food and nutritious food.125

The repercussions of food insecurity on individuals' well-being are significant. Insufficient access to nutritious meals and the constant concern about food sources wreak havoc on both physical and mental health. For children, the effects can be even more devastating, potentially leading to developmental setbacks and academic struggles due to a lack of nutrient-rich foods.

According to a 2017 publication from the USDA, research has shown that children who are food insecure have an increased risk of conditions such as anemia, cognitive difficulties, aggression, anxiety, asthma, behavioral problems, depression, and poorer oral health.126 In adults, food insecurity has been linked to depression and adverse mental health conditions, diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, and poor sleep outcomes.127

Another well-supported outcome of food insecurity is the higher occurrence of obesity among residents who are food insecure. When a person lives in a food desert and does not have access to transportation they are forced to survive on whatever food is readily available. This often includes high-calorie foods with little to no nutritional value. According to mySidewalks analysis of 2018-2022 US Census data, residents who live in food deserts often have to rely upon convenience stores and local independent

stores, which may have "higher prices, lower quality, and less variety."128

According to Closing The Health Gap using data collected in the Community Health Status Survey, 1 in 3 Cincinnatians are obese.129 The Community Health Status survey includes self-reported health data from individuals in the 22 counties surrounding Cincinnati.

Looking solely at city data, we can see that obesity rates are rising rapidly. In Cincinnati, 39% of adults had a BMI greater than or equal to 30 in 2020.130 The obesity rate reported in 2016 was 36.3%, an increase of 7.4% over the five years.131

As an organization rooted in improving the financial well-being of Black people and other marginalized groups, it is important to point out that the rise in the obesity rates is also having a significant impact on the direct medical cost for individuals who are obese. A 2021 study published in the Journal of Managed Care and Speciality Pharmacy using 2001-2016 data shows that direct medical costs for adults with obesity are 100% higher than those of their peers with normal weight.132

In the United States, diabetes is ranked among the top 10 leading causes of death. According to City Health Dashboards, 5% of diabetes cases are Type 1 diabetes, a condition where the body's immune system destroys cells that make insulin. The remaining 95% of individuals living with diabetes cases are Type 2, which is associated with obesity and lifestyle factors.133

A 2018 report published by the National Institutes of Health indicated that in the United States Black adults are nearly twice as likely to develop Type 2 diabetes than

White adults. The report goes on to state that this disparity has been increasing for several decades.134

In Cincinnati, the health dashboard shows that 13.2% of residents have diabetes which is significantly higher than the 9.8% average of other dashboard cities. The percentage of adults in Cincinnati with diabetes appears to be following the national upward trend, which is predicted to reach 33% by 2050 across the United States,135 as local cases have increased by nearly 4% over the 2016-2020 period.

food insecurity is not equally distributed across racial and ethnic lines in Hamilton County. In 2021 an astounding 25% of Black residents and 17% of Hispanic residents in Hamilton County reported food insecurity, compared to 9% of the county's White residents.

The percentage of food-insecure children in Hamilton County has also decreased. In 2015, children in Hamilton County experienced food insecurity at a rate of 21%, the rate of food-insecure children in Hamilton County is 16.9% as of 2021. It is

This data underscores the disproportionate burden of diet-based illness borne by Black communities, reflecting broader systemic issues related to food deserts and food insecurity.

Since the release of our last report, the food insecurity rate in Hamilton County has declined. In 2015, 18% of Hamilton County residents experienced food insecurity. The 2021 rate of food insecurity is 10.9%.136 Unfortunately, the rate of

important to note that the rate of food insecurity among children in Hamilton County jumped to 20% during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Based on a 2021 report featured in the ArcGIS Storymap, utilizing data compiled by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), it is evident that low-income neighborhoods, often predominantly comprised of minority communities, encounter significant hurdles in obtaining

"Driving change isn't a simple task. Giving people the tools they need to be healthy isn't enough. We need to remove the barriers as well." **-** *Kate Schroder, President & CEO of Interact For Health*137

affordable and nutritious food options, heightening their susceptibility to hunger and malnutrition. The absence of grocery stores within close proximity makes it increasingly difficult for residents to obtain fresh meat and produce, forcing them to rely on convenience stores and fast-food outlets, which often offer very limited selections of fresh foods and healthy staples.138

Low income and limited access to a vehicle are key factors leading to food insecurity. The USDA reported an 8% increase between 2010 and 2015 in the population with low access to stores, a 24% jump in low-income and low-access-to-stores population, and a 10% hike in the number of individuals with low-income, low-access, and no car in Hamilton County. In spite of the fact that there was a 4% increase in grocery stores in Hamilton County between 2011 and 2016.139

While the overall decline in food insecurity rates in our region is promising, knowing that approximately 90,250 Hamilton County residents including 32,300 children face food insecurity140 is evidence that there is a great deal of work to be done to ensure that every resident in our county has peace of mind knowing that their next meal will be filled with nutrient-dense foods.

In the following section, we will learn about the collective efforts throughout our community to address the health disparities that plague our great city. Our partners at Interact For Health summed it up perfectly in their December 2022 blog post "Where you live can impact how long you live."

ULGSO WORKS COLLABORATIVELY TO IMPACT HEALTH OUTCOMES

Closing the Health Gap

Introduction to The Center for Closing the Health Gap of Greater Cincinnati

The Center for Closing the Health Gap of Greater Cincinnati ("CTHG") is a community-based grassroots non-profit health organization with a mission to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities. CTHG leads several initiatives with one common goal, improving the health outcomes for our Black and Latinx communities.

CTHG's work is based upon the principle that the people most affected by health disparities must enable individuals and families to formulate their own interventions and monitor their progress. CTHG's pillars to address health disparities include Engagement, Empowerment and Advocacy.

developing solutions through Community Based Participatory Research (a research methodology that includes the participation of those who are affected by the issue or problem being studied for the dual purpose of creating knowledge and social change).

They also initiate solutions at the policy level with the Ohio Commission on Minority Health, City of Cincinnati Racial Equity Taskforce, and the Ohio Health Disparities Collaborative Coalition; and collaborating with healthcare organizations to develop and implement evidence-based interventions and innovative programs to deliver our mission.

ENGAGE
- Educate and train community leaders
- Recruit community residents
- Partner with health organizations and government agencies
- Community research and sponsored events

EMPOWER
- Assess and respond to individual health challenges
- Navigating insurance, Medicaid, Medicare
- Navigate healthcare systems
- Practical ways to exercise
- Cooking & eating healthy

ADVOCATE
- Provide resources to sustain families' healthier lifestyles
- Leadership role in Food Access Taskforce
- State and local government health committees

BULDING A CULTURE OF HEALTH

CTHG's Work in Addressing Health Disparities

Since 2004, CTHG has reached over 420,000 people through their innovative, tailored evidenced-based initiatives. Their approach is to engage and empower African Americans, Latinos, and white Appalachians to live healthier lives by

Closing The Health Gap's grassroots mobilization model engages, advocates, and empowers community movements. Driven by data from their evidenced-based initiatives, and examination of proposed solutions to alleviate racial/health inequities encourage application.

"CTHG promotes organizational collaboration to meet the vast needs of the marginalized by galvanizing gifts, resources and funding to collectively develop effective, long-term strategies"

Closing The Health Gap supports communities by equipping people on how to live healthier lives by activating their individual agency, and then demonstrating how they can build on that momentum to teach others to do the same.

The Do Right Campaign is a comprehensive approach to disease prevention that encourages people of all ages to eat right, move right and live right. As part of the Do Right Series CTHG created a series of free Wellness Workshops, activated community members with multi-week Diabetes and Heart Health Challenges, educated students (K-6) with their Do Right Kids, which includes components for in-school physical education, after school programming and a family engagement, Do Right! Live Right! focuses on helping individuals manage stress and increase social engagement as well as works to support Black caregivers. Almost all participants said they would recommend this program to family and friends.

The Health Expo is an annual free community event bringing health access directly to the Cincinnati community. In 2023, nearly 10,000 of our neighbors attended the event, enjoying health information, healthy food and fitness, and local and national entertainment. Since the Health Expo started in 2005, CTHG

has welcomed more than 150,000 visitors and administered more than 25,000 free health screenings.

Since its inception, CTHG promotes organizational collaboration to meet the vast needs of the marginalized by galvanizing gifts, resources and funding to collectively develop effective, long-term strategies. One of the most recent collaborations with the Urban League centers around the collective initiative to educate and empower community members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We Must Save Us connected over 60 community partners to increase awareness, build knowledge, and expand capacity to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown populations in Hamilton County. This initiative included primary quantitative and qualitative research, development of the call to action *We Must Save Us* campaign, community support groups and outcome tracking.

This work led to a robust multimedia campaign that included virtual townhalls, TV, video streaming, radio, print (mailers, handouts, ad), social media, outreach and text reminders. This initiative resulted in thousands receiving lifesaving information and access to vaccinations and test kits via events, town halls, mailers and social media.

Furthermore, CTHG and ULGSO have rallied together to address and alleviate health disparities within the Black community. For example, the Urban League stands as a long-term supporter of Closing the Health Gap's annual Health Expo as well as a host site for various health-related townhalls. By fostering a network of support, these organizations amplify their individual impact while collectively contributing to the overarching goal of creating a healthier and more equitable future for Black residents in Cincinnati.

RENEE MAHAFFEY HARRIS, MPH
President & CEO
Closing the Health Gap

The Health Collaborative

Introduction to The Health Collaborative

The Health Collaborative (THC) brings together healthcare leaders and community partners with the goal of improving the health of our region. Collectively, we recognize that multi-sector partnerships can accomplish more together than alone.

Critical issues like community health, emergency preparedness, and healthcare workforce shortages are too big for any one advocate to deliver on its own. THC collaborates with the community to:

- Collect pertinent data that drives clarity on the most pressing problems that impact community health.
- Create strategic action plans to solve these problems and convene the right people to activate them.
- Serve as an accelerant in the community, securing and sharing essential funding and resources to execute targeted programs.
- Create stability in times of disaster and trauma through deep coordination and planning.

Our power to create a healthy and thriving community exponentially increases through collective efforts. THC is proud to partner with healthcare leaders to generate this power and dramatically improve the well-being of our diverse community.

THC's Work in Addressing Health Disparities and Health Equity

Over the last decade, THC has been a leader and accelerator for addressing health disparities in our community through numerous initiatives across our three strategic pillars.

In Community Health, the focus is on health and healthcare equity across hospitals and health systems with a priority around systems change and social drivers of health. Within our strategy are key projects that support a collective health agenda.

- Facilitating a Regional Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) with a focus on social and structural drivers of health. In 2021, over 10,000 community voices, 8% identifying as Black or African American, were included in the data and priorities were set (https://healthcollab.org/community-health-needs-assessment/) with a focus on social and structural drivers so efforts could target health inequities.
- Launching Mama Certified, an innovative badging called Mama Certified, with a goal to provide Black parents-to-be with a way to assess and compare the maternal equity-related efforts of local hospital networks and to encourage increased efforts toward maternal equity. By prioritizing maternal and infant health equity in partnership with Cradle Cincinnati, Queen's Village, and birthing hospitals, this collective impact work focuses on

"Our power to create a healthy and thriving community exponentially increases through collective efforts."

regional systems change to create equity in maternal healthcare by listening and learning from Black parents. THC has worked to ensure accurate and timely data collection, analysis, management, reporting, and visualization, all in co-designed processes with hospital birthing facilities and Black mothers.

- Innovating to connect clinical and social care to help connect people to resources for things like food, housing, and transportation. Starting with federally funded projects including Accountable Health Communities (AHC) and Comprehensive Primary Care Plus (CPC+), THC serves as a backbone and coordinating body for cross-sector partnerships across the region. With new federal requirements, THC continues this work by convening hospitals with experts in care coordination at community partner sites to align on a whole-person and equity centered processes across the region.
  - AHC brought together clinical providers with community-based organizations to connect patients with health-related social needs (like food and housing) to resources.
  - CPC+ at THC was the nation's largest multi-payer payment reform and care delivery transition

  - project in Ohio working with primary care to transition the practices from fee for service to pay for value.

In Emergency Preparedness and Response, THC leads the TriState Disaster Preparedness Coalition serving as a dynamic platform to connect with subject matter experts and cultivating collaboration for a robust disaster preparedness framework to respond to disasters, public health emergencies and other catastrophic events that impact the health and safety of the community and healthcare system. In this role, we actively collaborate with government, community organizations, emergency management, and communications to ensure our region's preparedness for both small- and large-scale emergency events and contribute to the region's resilience. aids?

- Operating as the single regional convener for addressing health equity in emergency preparedness for the designated region (Region 6) in the state of Ohio.
- Coordinating the TriState Disaster Preparedness Coalition, a multi-disciplinary group of agencies and organizations who collaborate in order to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters, mass casualty incidents, public health emergencies, or other catastrophic incidents requiring a unified response.

> *"Our mission is to increase the size, diversity, and preparedness of our region's healthcare talent pipeline."*

- Bring stakeholders together specifically from underserved and marginalized populations to assess causes of health inequities post-disaster.
- Regularly convene specialized affinity groups to bolster resilience in areas such as hospital emergency management, health disparities, security, and communications.

Workforce Innovation brings together employers, educators, and community partners are convened to build, align, and promote in-demand healthcare career programs and pathways. We do this by identifying and addressing barriers to expanding access to and success in earning in-demand credentials and degrees, providing and supporting quality healthcare career exploration, including work-based learning, and collecting and analyzing regional workforce data to drive efforts. Our mission is to increase the size, diversity, and preparedness of our region's healthcare talent pipeline.

- Increasing career Exploration opportunities for all students through TapHealth Summer Academy, TAP remote, HealthFORCE, and our Regional Career Exploration Collaborative, with a focus on underrepresented populations.
- Publishing a robust Regional Healthcare Workforce data dashboard to raise awareness to in-demand roles and diversity trends.

- Working with regional education and community partners to address critical healthcare workforce shortages, like partnering with local community colleges (Cincinnati State) to address a shortage of medical assistants, with a specific focus on increasing the student population for this apprenticeship program to Black women.
- Partnering regionally and across Ohio to address barriers to launching and operating in-demand healthcare programs.

While most of our work is organized through these three pillars, THC also provides other essential services that are more efficiently delivered consistently and collectively across the community while adapting to the changing healthcare and advocacy needs of the region. Over the last several years, we've been involved in many initiatives that affect certain populations, including Black residents, and pride ourselves on being able to participate in collaborative solutions that create more culturally response healthcare services. Some examples of this work include:

- Ongoing convening of several groups of key hospital leadership to discuss health disparities, share best practices, and encourage collaboration. Some of the near 40 hospital groups brought together include the diversity, equity,

"Our work is driven by the needs and priorities of the communities we serve - hospitals, health systems, and community organizations."

and inclusion (DEI) Leaders Affinity group, a Health Equity Leaders working group, and the Chief Nursing Officers.

- Advocacy for HB371 that underscores the commitment to overcoming obstacles in implementing legislation that will enhance access and outcomes for the region, specifically for women and breast cancer screenings.

- Addressing COVID vaccine equity by partnering with The Voice of Your Customer, a Black-owned and minority marketing and consulting firm to develop locally focused outreach to increase vaccine education, access, and acceptance in groups that have been marginalized in our community.

- Partnering with Hamilton County Public Health and Cincinnati's community health center to increase HIV testing and collaborate with other federally qualified health centers to share learnings aligned with larger efforts to end the HIV epidemic.

- By managing joint purchasing efforts on behalf of our members through a group purchasing organization (GPO), we help hospitals and healthcare systems support minority-owned and local companies while saving money and advancing their health equity goals.

Working Together with the Urban League

Our work is driven by the needs and priorities of the communities we serve - hospitals, health systems, and community organizations. Success can only be achieved through deep collaboration, trusted partnerships, and shared visions towards a more equitable future. Therefore, we rely on partners like Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio, to increase collective efforts for improving the health of our communities. In recent years, THC and ULGSO have worked together on:

CHNA – identifying and prioritizing significant health needs in the Black community.

Urban League is a critical partner to the regional Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement plan. As a trusted partner for advancing health justice, personal empowerment, and economic self-sufficiency within the African Americans, their voice and engagement is present on both our Advisory Committee and Special Populations Task Force. In the Advisory Committee, we are grateful for their input on the creation and production of the assessment and prioritization of significant health needs in marginalized

"Creating a shared and collaborative response, that centered equity through trusted community partnerships, was critical to the pandemic response in our community."

communities, including the Black community.

Test & Protect – collectively addressing the COVID-19 pandemic

In a collaborative effort, THC worked with Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio as a strategic partner to co-lead the Community Core team as part of the Test & Protect project. This project was shaped to stop the spread of COVID-19 within high-risk populations of Hamilton County through comprehensive testing and vaccine administration. Our collective efforts extended testing and vaccine administration; we engaged in robust discussions to devise effective strategies, ensuring equitable access to services. Together, we sought innovative solutions, incorporating wraparound support to address the multifaceted challenges presented by the pandemic.

Creating a shared and collaborative response, that centered equity through trusted community partnerships, was critical to the pandemic response in our community. While THC can support data, convening, and strategizing, Urban League – not specifically a health organization – was able to use their physical presence in Avondale as a trusted place to receive testing and vaccinations for Black communities, and their social presence to share updated information

and keep Black communities informed and aware of what is happening locally. Ashlee Young, VP of Policy and Strategic Initiatives at the time said, "Collaborating together was the most valuable piece of this response. The Health Collaborative had meetings for all the partners to come together just to hear what folks were doing, to get updates, and to strategize. Being able to have a regional goal and effort was extremely important towards an equitable process and better health outcomes for all. The collective messaging was important because people at this time trusted messengers."

Future Initiatives of The Health Collaborative

THC is dedicated to serving as an essential partner in the Greater Cincinnati region to accelerate positive healthcare changes to create a thriving and healthy community. Staying true to our core priorities – community health, workforce innovation, and disaster preparedness – there are several key initiatives within our work planned to drive action and create impact to reducing health and healthcare disparities in our region.

CHNA AND COLLECTIVE HEALTH AGENDA

A requirement for all nonprofit hospital facilities and local health departments, this data-driven review of our

> *"Addressing infant mortality is a true collective impact effort in this region, and THC is committed to continued listening, learning, and changing behaviors in collaboration with hospitals to create better environments and systems for Black mothers and babies."*

community's health provides valuable information that illuminates trends across the region and informs the process for setting collective priorities. The regional community health improvement plan (CHIP) then creates actionable strategies that can be implemented within hospitals and across the healthcare ecosystem to improve outcomes. In 2024, the next CHNA will be conducted in partnership with hospitals, health departments, and community partners, by centering equity, lifting community voice of those most impacted by health inequities, and driving action for collective priorities.

CONNECTING MEDICAL AND SOCIAL CARE

In 2023, federal regulations required hospitals to start formally screening for social needs (like food, transportation, and housing) and document those needs across the health system. Documentation of needs is only the first step, as helping connect people to resources for those needs is a must. As a region, disjointed efforts could result in a disparate system of assessment and disconnected services. However, THC is uniquely positioned to support the convening, coordinating, and planning for a community-wide effort and plan.

We are dedicated to helping create a sustainable ecosystem of multidisciplinary partners who use shared language, an up-to-date resource database, and integrated technology platforms to deliver community care planning to the most vulnerable community members with social needs. Through coordination with key stakeholders like United Way, we are working to build homegrown solutions that center health parity and support community organizations, and target health disparities.

MAMA CERTIFIED

As a collective impact approach to maternal and infant health equity, the next few years offer exciting opportunities to showcase the equity work of hospitals and build relationships with Black mothers in the community to influence and activate equity work within the clinical setting.

In partnership with 8 birthing facilities across four different health systems in Hamilton and Butler counties, Cradle Cincinnati, and Queen's Village, THC is committed to true systems change for Black moms through Mama Certified. Addressing infant mortality is a true collective impact effort in this region, and THC is committed to continued listening, learning, and changing behaviors in collaboration with hospitals to create better environments and systems for Black mothers and babies.

> *"This collaborative initiative aims to bring community stakeholders together, particularly from underserved and marginalized populations, to assess the causes of health inequities in our community post-disasters."*

Over the next few years, we are excited to launch the Community and Staff badges for Mama Certified, focusing on hospital engagement with community organizations, and supporting employees in the healthcare system.

HEALTH EQUITY IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In a unique collaboration between the Tri-State Disaster Preparedness Coalition (TSDPC), the Administration for Strategic Preparedness and Response (ASPR), and the World Institute on Disability (WID), we are working to address disparities that often emerge in the aftermath of disasters through the process of establishing a regional task force. This collaborative initiative aims to bring community stakeholders together, particularly from underserved and marginalized populations, to assess the causes of health inequities in our community post-disasters. The task force will develop best practices and strategies to improve outcomes for all members of our community.

DIVERSITY THROUGH AN ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE DASHBOARD

The dashboard highlights a batch of 10 key jobs, based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) codes in two major categories for priority areas for workforce development. These categories include "Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations" and "Healthcare Support Occupations". Data is presented on workforce demand (vacancy rates and job postings) and workforce supply (degrees awarded for 10 job titles). A public Tableau set allows for review of additional data on job titles to access information on certificates and degrees awarded to new graduates, including certificates and degrees awarded based on race and ethnicity.

INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE WORKFORCE

THC's TAP Health Summer Academy has piloted several initiatives that target diverse students, including TAP RN Diversity and a "You Belong in Healthcare" luncheons for students to connect with diverse leaders.

INCREASING VISIBILITY OF LOCAL AND DIVERSE VENDORS TO HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

THC's GPO contracts with local, diverse vendors that meet niche needs of our members that cannot be met through large national GPO relationships. Through these purchases our membership contributes to local economic vitality which ultimately mitigates socioeconomic and health disparities while strengthening the resilience of our supply chain.

IDENTIFYING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY IN TRAUMA DATA REGISTRY BY STRATIFYING DATA

The Health Collaborative receives data on physical trauma events at regional hospital facilities. By analyzing this regional data by demographics such as race/ethnicity and sexual orientation/gender identity, when available, THC, along with our partners, will be able to consider aligned approaches to center equity in preventing and treating trauma in our region.

LAUREN BARTOSZEK, PHD, MCHES
**Director, Community
Health Strategies
The Health Collaborative**

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Introduction to Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

The prevalence of health disparities in children and youth is well documented. Black children have worse outcomes when it comes to pre-term births, infant mortality, diabetes, asthma and depression compared to White children. Disparities are driven, in part, by social, economic, and environmental inequities that disproportionately impact Black and Brown children.

Black children and youth have lower access to health care and poorer health outcomes compared to their peers. Social factors (housing, employment, transportation, food insecurity) impact health and are further complicated by racism, bias, and structural barriers which impede many families' ability to overcome generational poverty, acquire affordable housing, and earn livable wages.141

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center ("Cincinnati Children's") has called Avondale home since 1926. The primary focus areas of the medical center's partnership with Avondale are to reduce infant mortality and prematurity, improve kindergarten readiness and third-grade reading and improve the community's health. As part of this partnership, Cincinnati Children's operates three school-based health centers year-round for all children in the neighborhood. Our Pediatric Primary Care

Clinic also located in Avondale, focuses on families who lack access to care.

Cincinnati Children's has a long tradition of community involvement. From employee volunteer efforts to partnership investments with other nonprofits, we are deeply committed to leading, collaborating and advocating to measurably improve the health of local children and reduce disparities in targeted populations. We are committed to addressing significant health needs that may go beyond our role as Greater Cincinnati's leading pediatric healthcare provider. We strive to reach outside our walls to improve healthcare outcomes for all children in the region.

The Office of Community Relations at Cincinnati Children's engages in community partnerships. We believe in creating opportunities for community partners who align with our strategic plan and goal to improve the health of local children and reduce disparities in targeted populations.

In addition, we strive to build honest and sustainable relationships with the community organizations and agencies we work with. Through our collaborative work in the community, we are committed to addressing, decreasing, and ultimately eliminating social, educational

> *"Cincinnati Children's recognizes that poverty and other social determinants, including racism, are key drivers for supporting child and community health."*

and health disparities in underprivileged populations. Our vision is to be the leader in providing culturally relevant program consultation and evaluation services and in training the next generation of community health researchers and leaders.

CCMHC's Current Work in Addressing Health Inequities

In Cincinnati, 1 in 4 children (25%) lives in poverty. For Black children, the number is more than 1 in 3 or 39.4%. The effects of racism and poverty lead to higher rates of childhood asthma, infant mortality and other health conditions. For example, Black children are more likely to be admitted for asthma.[142] For some, the asthma is worse due to landlords who don't maintain their properties leading to unhealthy housing conditions.[143]

Cincinnati Children's recognizes that poverty and other social determinants, including racism, are key drivers for supporting child and community health. Cincinnati Children's is leading efforts to improve child health and health equity. This work includes a new Equity Center, new clinical and social support services, an office focused on community relationships and a range of other hospital and community initiatives. Brief descriptions of several of these efforts follows:

The Michael Fisher Child Health Equity Center (Fisher Center) launched in 2022 with the vision of aligning, accelerating and expanding important work across Cincinnati Children's and in collaboration with the community to ensure that all children have an equitable opportunity to live their best lives.

The Fisher Center seeks to address factors that influence child health-from education to economic mobility to emotional well-being, while considering innovative approaches to addressing deep-rooted and challenging inequities. Creating family-centered community networks and partnering with schools, social service agencies, businesses, government, and others is important to the work of the Fisher Center.

One area of priority and partnership is current work to address the complex and challenging issue of food insecurity, which affects thousands of patients, families, and community members in Greater Cincinnati and can significantly impact child health and well-being. The Fisher Center is collaborating with internal departments and community food pantries and organizations, including the FreeStore Foodbank, Kroger, La Soupe and others, to address hunger and food insecurity within the medical center and in the community.

"We are working together to address disparities and collaborating so that high-quality, effective resources are accessible to children and families"

The Fisher Center is also helping pediatric subspecialists to set goals and to close health disparities for chronic illnesses such as asthma, sickle cell disease, diabetes, depression and other pediatric conditions. The teams are brought together to learn from each other because the root social causes of the disparities are similar no matter the condition. Data is tracked closely to determine how the needs of patients and families can be met.

The teams are supported to work with community partners, such as the Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati, to help ensure the foundational social and economic needs of youth and families are met, along with their medical needs. A recent evaluation of the Legal Aid partnership showed that legal advocates are indeed "strong medicine": children in families referred to Legal Aid had a 38% reduction in hospital admissions.144

The All Children Thrive Learning Network (ACT), supported by the Fisher Center, is an innovative, city-wide collaborative between families, community members, social agencies, educators, public health agencies, and healthcare providers. ACT has a critical and shared goal which is to create the conditions for our children to thrive. ACT knows that this will not be possible unless children have their basic needs met, are academically supported to achieve their full potential, feel safe and

connected to adults in their community, and have access to healthcare to help them achieve positive health outcomes.

The vision for ACT is that the community is a place where all children have access to the support and services they need to thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. To get there, we are working together to address disparities and collaborating so that high-quality, effective resources are accessible to children and families. ACT hosts learning sessions twice a year where community leaders and families are invited in a "all learn, all teach" format to share data and co-create solutions to challenging community problems.

One core strategy of ACT is to offer quality improvement training and coaching to community organizations that are key to equitable child outcomes. Over 130 community leaders from over 35 organizations have been trained to date. A second core strategy is to partner deeply with parents and caregivers across initiatives to guide the changes being made. These caregivers themselves are now being offered quality improvement training in our new course co-designed with families.

Cincinnati Children's has a five-year strategic plan that embeds Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in every part of

"We're committed to addressing significant health needs beyond our walls and achieving healthcare outcomes for all children in the region"

our work and is based on research, leadership involvement and best practices. The plan is designed to elevate our responsibilities and accountability as an organization. By integrating the DEI programs with the hospital's vision, mission, operations and strategies, we can provide positive employee experiences.

Even more vital, together as one Cincinnati Children's we can provide exceptional patient care that improves the health of children from our local and global communities. As part of this plan, our vision is together, commit to: Ending child health disparities, Advancing diversity, equity and inclusion, Standing against racism, Creating an environment free of discrimination, and Taking personal and institutional responsibility. Cincinnati Children's was recently again ranked among nation's Best Employers for Diversity by Forbes Magazine.145

Community Relations (CR) is a critical function that supports CCHMC's mission, vision, and the ways we partner with the community to transform child health. Cincinnati Children's has a long tradition of community involvement. From employee volunteer efforts to partnership investments with other nonprofits, we are deeply committed to leading, collaborating, and advocating to measurably improve the health of local children and reduce disparities in targeted

populations. We are committed to addressing significant health needs that may go beyond our role as Greater Cincinnati's leading pediatric healthcare provider. We strive to reach outside our walls to improve healthcare outcomes for all children in the region.

Our team of experts in community engagement, public relations, grass-roots advocacy, and community health serve as a resource and point of contact for community partners seeking to collaborate with Cincinnati Children's. From partnerships with other nonprofits to employee volunteer efforts, we're deeply committed to collaborating, leading and advocating to improve the health of local children and reduce disparities in targeted populations.

We're committed to addressing significant health needs beyond our walls and achieving healthcare outcomes for all children in the region. Our total community benefit exceeded $400 million in fiscal year 2022 and supported charitable patient care, subsidized health services, health professional education, research and community outreach.

Cincinnati Children's HealthVine is a partnership with families' insurance plans that assists them with: (1) Finding the right care; (2) Scheduling and attending appointments; (3) Filling prescriptions;

"We are a network of community members and organizations working across sectors to measurably improve Cincinnati's infant mortality rate"

(4) Removing barriers to care; and and (5) Connecting to community resources.

HealthVine provides care managers for children with significant physical and mental health needs and conditions. HealthVine currently supports more than 117,000 members in the Southwest Ohio region through our Care Management and OhioRISE programs.

Children and youth are eligible for HealthVine Care Management if they: (1) Are covered by CareSource Medicaid; (2) Live in Adams, Brown, Butler, Clermont, Clinton, Hamilton, Highland, or Warren county; (3) Are in one of the following age groups: (a) Newborn until their 19th birthday, or (b) Newborn until their 21st birthday and is in either the Aged, Blind, or Disabled; Waiver; or the Adopted and Foster Care program.

HealthVine also provides care coordination services for members with complex behavioral health needs through the OhioRISE program. Youth are eligible for HealthVine OhioRISE if they: (1) Are eligible for Ohio Medicaid; (2) Live in Eastern Hamilton, Clermont, Brown, Adams, Scioto or Lawrence county; (3) Have significant behavioral health needs, as defined by: (a) An assessment with Ohio Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) or (b) A recent history of requiring inpatient mental health or

substance abuse treatment.

We are a network of community members and organizations working across sectors to measurably improve Cincinnati's infant mortality rate. We bring together services and systems to help moms and, in turn, save babies' lives. Cradle Cincinnati's approach is "To put Mom's at the Center" of their services.

Cradle Cincinnati Connections links families to the resources they need for healthy pregnancies and healthy families. Our team of community health workers, social workers, nurses and dietitians support families throughout Hamilton County by providing access to baby items and stable housing, access to breastfeeding support and mental health services and everything in between.

The Cradle Cincinnati Learning Collaborative is a network of more than 200 healthcare professionals representing hospitals, community health centers, home health agencies, and social support systems working together to transform prenatal care through quality improvement tactics. Cradle Cincinnati understands that including Community Voices is important to improving maternal and infant health. The work with Queens Village is an example of this inclusive approach.

"Our vision is to assure safe, healthy and nurturing families and communities where all children can achieve their full potential. "

Queens Village is a supportive community of powerful Black women who come together to relax, repower and take care of themselves and each other. Queens Village centers Black women's voices, shifting not only racial disparities in birth outcomes but the conditions that drive inequity in maternal and infant health.

The Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Cincinnati Children's is a premier program that has helped set the national standard for enhancing and strengthening evaluations of child abuse. Each year, the Child Abuse Team at the Mayerson Center treats more than 2,000 children for whom abuse is suspected – an average of six to seven alleged or suspected abuse cases a day. We collaborate with many community partners in the investigation and treatment of victims at our 7,200-square-foot facility on the hospital's Burnet Campus.

Our center is one of only a few in the nation housed within a children's hospital. 34,000 children – or about 100 a day – in Ohio alone are victims of abuse and neglect, and because of under-reporting, the actual number could be three times as high. We conduct state-of-the-art diagnostic, treatment, prevention and training programs, as well as cutting-edge research in the field of child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, child neglect and

parenting.

Along with physicians, nurses and social workers, we also work with the Department of Job and Family Services. Our vision is to assure safe, healthy and nurturing families and communities where all children can achieve their full potential. Not only does the Mayerson Center offer clinical services, but it helped create a free trauma informed care training.146 This free training equips educators and supportive adults with the knowledge and skills to support children and youth who have experienced trauma.

Every Child Succeeds is a program that aims to ensure that every baby born in Greater Cincinnati has the opportunity to thrive. The program partners with families and communities to strengthen family well-being, support healthy environments, and optimize infant and toddler development from birth to age three.

Every Child Succeeds' family support workers engage families in their homes in Butler, Clermont and Hamilton Counties in Ohio, and in Boone, Campbell, Grant and Kenton Counties in Kentucky. Our evidence-based approach to partnering with families enables parents to be the best advocates they can be for themselves and their children, resulting in healthier families and children who are more prepared for school.

"At Cincinnati Children's we recognize the unique challenges faced by Black children and adolescents when it comes to mental health care access and support"

The goal of Cincinnati Children's School-Based Health Centers is to ensure that every child adolescence. The Health Centers serve as a trusted partner to the children and families served, whether it's prescribing medicine, performing a school physical or ensuring they're growing and developing as they should.

The health care team takes care of the child from the time they're a baby all the way through their teen years. In addition to providing pediatric care, health providers connect families with other providers to ensure each child's needs are met. And providers make referrals as needed to pediatric specialists. School-based health centers are patient-centered, family-focused and dedicated to the health and wellness of the children and communities we serve. Our driving force is the relationship between your family, provider and care team.

Future Initiatives of CCMHC

At Cincinnati Children's we recognize the unique challenges faced by Black children and adolescents when it comes to mental health care access and support. Acknowledging the urgent necessity for tailored interventions and equitable access to care, we are initiating forward-looking endeavors to sculpt a more promising future for local children and adolescents

dealing with mental health challenges.

Cincinnati Children's new Mental and Behavioral Health Institute (MBHI) will integrate three divisions at Cincinnati Children's: Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Psychology, and Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics.

There will be more than 1,000 professionals working within the MBHI. These teams work in locations including schools, neighborhood primary care clinics, emergency departments, and the new state-of-the-art care center that opened at Cincinnati Children's College Hill campus. Teams are developing advanced early warning tools to help clinicians detect when children are on a path to developing anxiety, depression or suicidal thoughts. And experts in quality improvement are re-inventing outpatient care to proactively address mental and behavioral health concerns to reduce or eliminate an inpatient hospital stay.

In addition to providing more inpatient care than any other pediatric health system in the country, Cincinnati Children's scientists conduct extensive research to improve treatment outcomes and address equity in mental health outcomes. The Institute will also enhance

mental health clinical care and research at Cincinnati Children's. Examples are the recently launched Heart and Mind Well Being Center and the Integrated Behavioral Health program that embeds mental health professionals at Cincinnati Children's pediatric primary care clinics.

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A TALE OF TWO DISTRICTS

The rate of local children living below the poverty threshold is unsettlingly high. A 2021 article published in Cincinnati Enquirer estimates that there are over 65,000 impoverished children in Cincinnati.147

The reality that nearly 40% of Cincinnati children are living in poverty drove organizations like the Urban League and our key community partners across various sectors to form the Child Poverty Collaborative in 2015. The Child Poverty Collaborative's 5-year goal, to move 5,000 households including 10,000 children out of poverty, led to concerted efforts to address the issues contributing to this alarming statistic. Through targeted interventions encompassing education, workforce development, affordable housing initiatives, and access to healthcare, the Collaborative aimed to break the cycle of poverty and create sustainable pathways to economic stability for vulnerable families.

At the Urban League, we stand firm on the belief that education plays a key role in lifting individuals and families out of poverty. Higher educational attainment leads to increased earnings, while lower educational attainment is linked to increased exposure to violence, hunger, and parental incarceration. Lack of education increases one's risk of being subjected to abuse and neglect.148

A 2022 study published in Frontiers in Public Health found that one's educational level is a predictor of their health. According to the study, adults with higher education are less likely to develop morbidities and disabilities. Well-educated individuals tend to outlive their under-educated counterparts and spend more years of their lives in better health.149

An analysis of local neighborhoods

throughout the City of Cincinnati revealed the intersectionality between race and socio-economic status of Cincinnati's segregated neighborhoods.

The neighborhoods with the highest level of educational attainment are listed as having a predominantly White population. Among the neighborhoods with the lowest total education levels, 60% are predominantly Black or mixed-race neighborhoods, including Lower Price Hill. This unequal distribution has deep roots in historical and systemic factors such as segregated schools, discriminatory policies, disinvestment in predominantly Black communities, and unequal access to educational resources and opportunities.

In Cincinnati, Cincinnati Public Schools ("CPS") is the largest school district. While CPS stands as the largest educational entity in the city, its landscape is characterized by profound discrepancies in educational quality and opportunity. At the heart of this dichotomy is a sharp contrast between the experience of children attending community schools and those enrolled in exclusive schools throughout the district. For the purpose of this report, we are defining exclusive schools as those that have restrictive enrollment policies that limit admission based on high performance on standardized testing, assessments, or artistic auditions.

According to CPS's website, there are 66 total schools within the district, including 18 high schools.150 Utilizing data from the U.S. News & World Reports Best High School Rankings Report, which uses publicly available school data from 17,660 high schools across the United States, we found that the top-ranked high schools in the CPS district are Walnut Hills High School, School for Creative & Performing Arts and Spencer Center of Gifted and

Exceptional Students, respectively. Of the top-ranked high schools, all are exclusive and have stringent enrollment requirements. The graduation rate at all 3 of the top schools is extremely high. U.S. News & World Reports uses graduation rates to measure how well a school is serving its students. To measure graduation rates at each school, the number of students entering the 9th grade in the 2018-2019 school year was compared to the proportion who graduated four years later in 2022.151

Admission to Walnut Hills High School requires a student to score exceptionally well on standardized tests. According to the U.S. News & World Report data, 42% of the students at Walnut Hills are considered minority students. The graduation rate for Walnut Hills High School exceeds 95%.152

Walnut Hills High School is ranked as the top school in Ohio, Cincinnati Metro as well as the CPS district. In 2023, Walnut Hills High School was recognized nationally as a 2023 National Blue Ribbon School. This designation is awarded to schools throughout the country that provide an outstanding educational experience to its student body.153

School for Creative and Performing Arts and Spencer Center of Gifted and Exceptional Students are both considered magnet schools.154 The CPS magnet school program is an initiative designed to offer specialized educational experiences to students within the district. Most CPS magnet schools typically focus on specific educational themes. It is critically important to point out that across the United States, the magnet school movement grew out of protest against the

TOP 6 RANKED HIGH SCHOOLS IN CPS DISTRICT

■ School for Creative and Performing Arts　**■ Spencer Center for Gifted and Exceptional Students**　**■ Clark Montessori High School**

■ Shroder Paideia High School　**■ Hughes STEM High School**　**■ Walnut Hills High School**

Graduation Rate: 95%, 95%, 92%, 86%, 89%, 95%

Total Minority Enrollment: 73%, 50%, 64%, 96%, 96%, 42%

Source: U.S. News & World Report Best High School Rankings Report Cincinnati Public High Schools.
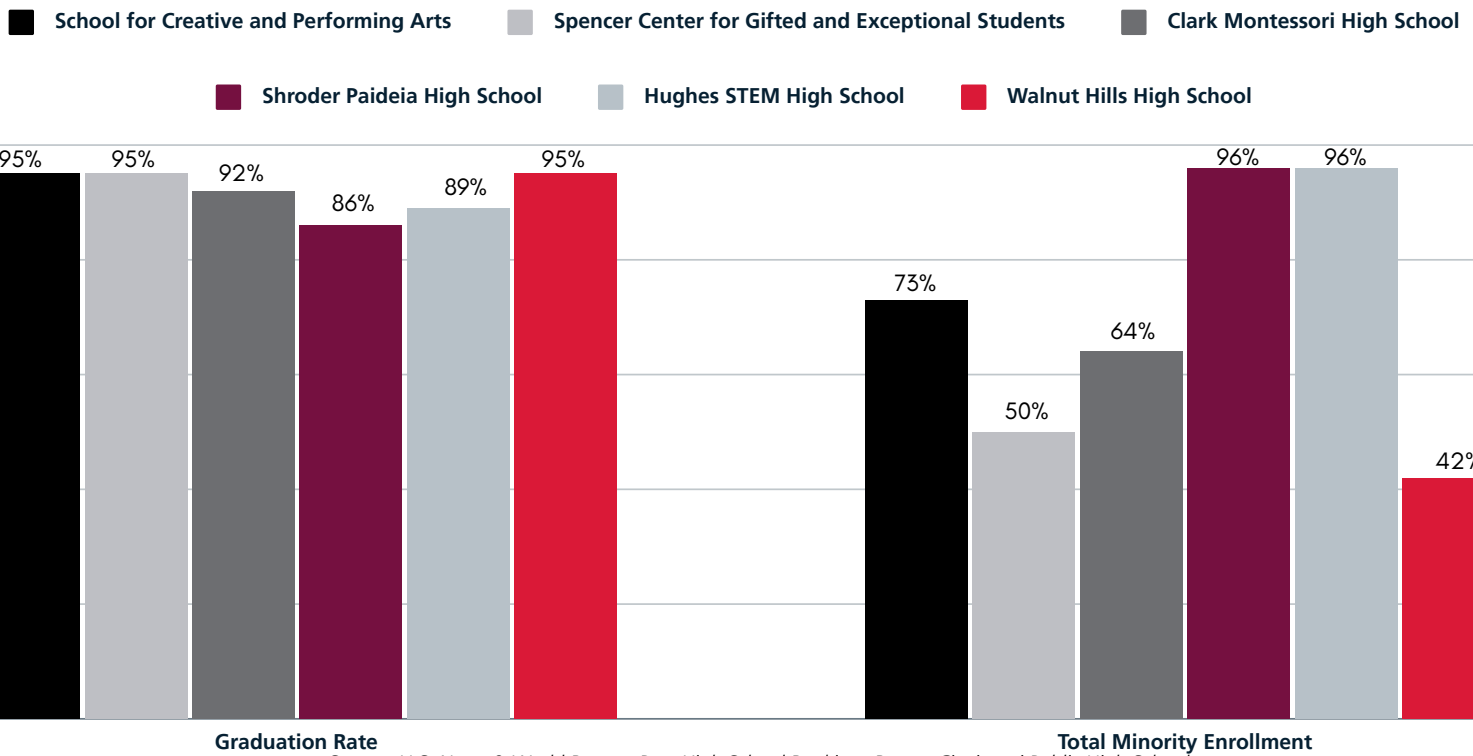
LOWER QUARTILE HIGH SCHOOLS IN CPS DISTRICT

Source: U.S. News & World Report Best High School Rankings Report Cincinnati Public High Schools.
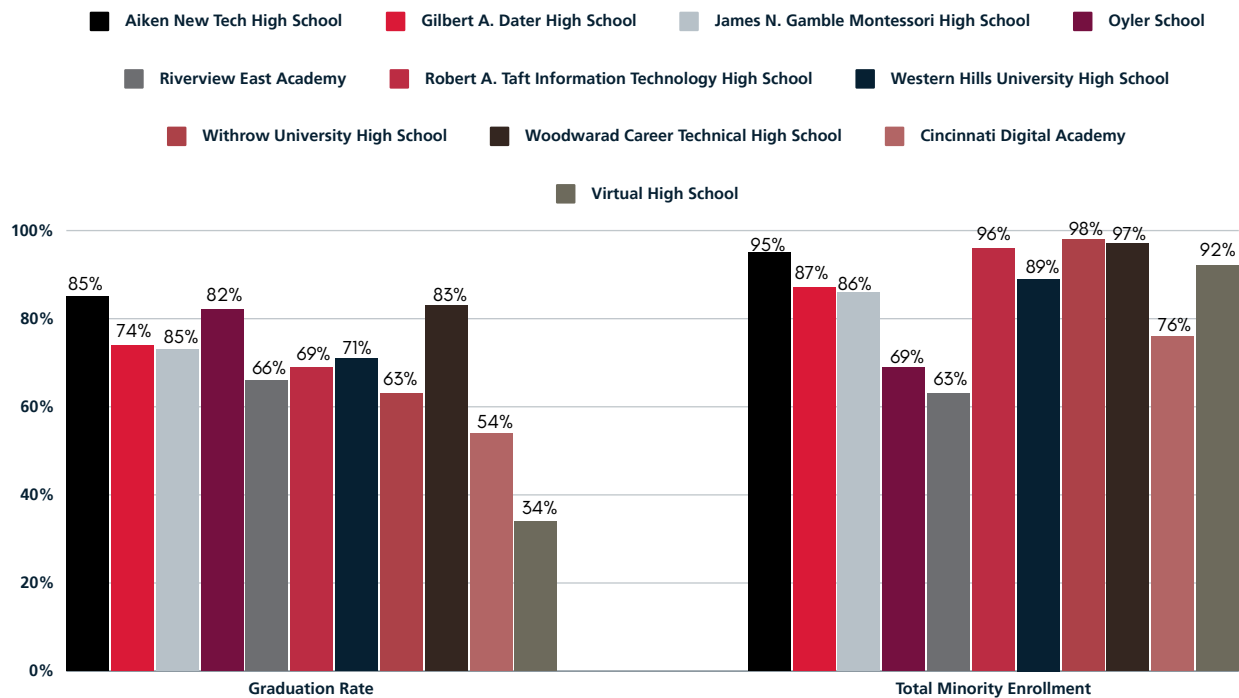
desegregation of public schools.155

Students at the School for Creative and Performing Arts are educated in arts and entertainment. The minority population at School for Creative and Performing Arts is 73% making it the most diverse among the top 3 high schools in the district. The graduation rate at the School for Creative and Performing Arts is above 95%.156

According to the district's website, Spencer Center of Gifted and Exceptional Students ("Spencer Center") is listed as an East-side magnet school, meaning that enrollment is further restricted to students who reside on Cincinnati's Eastside. The total minority population at Spencer Center is 49.5%. Like the other top-ranked schools in the CPS district, Spencer Center has a graduation rate of over 95%. The student-to-teacher ratio at Spencer Center is 12:1, the lowest among the top 3 ranked high schools in the district.157

The U.S. News & World Report rankings combine schools within the bottom quartile and conceal the individual scores for under-performing schools. In the CPS district, the lowest-ranking high schools listed alphabetically are Aiken New Tech High School, Gilbert A.

Dater High School, James N. Gamble Montessori High School, Oyler School, Riverview East Academy, Robert A. Taft Information Technology High School, Western Hills University High School, Withrow University High School, and Woodward Career Technical High School.

Using each school's graduation rate, we ascertained that Withrow University High School, Riverview East Academy and Western Hills University High School had the lowest graduation rates respectively.158 All of the ranked schools at the bottom of the list have a predominantly minority population. Of these 3 schools, Western Hills University High School has the highest student-to-teacher ratio at 22:1, which far exceeds the district average of 16.70 students per teacher.159

To evaluate the school rankings for CPS schools that support primary school-aged students we focused on elementary school data provided by the U.S. News & World Reports School Rankings as most CPS students in grades 7-12 attend high school campuses. In the CPS district, students in grades K-6 are assigned to their neighborhood school unless their parents use the district's online lottery to enroll them in a magnet school program.160

In their evaluation of elementary schools, U.S. News and World Reports used math and reading proficiency and performance data. The school's student-to-teacher ratio was used as a tie-breaker when schools had equivalent proficiency and performance scores.161

According to the U.S. News & World Reports school rankings the top-performing elementary schools in the CPS district are Spencer Center of Gifted and Exceptional Students, Kilgour School and Hyde Park Elementary respectively.162

Spencer Center of Gifted and Exceptional Students serves students in grades 2-12, thus students in the elementary classification are in grades 2-6. Of the top 3 elementary schools, Spencer Center is the most diverse. At the elementary level, the minority population at Spencer Center is 53.5%. 163

TOP 5 RANKED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN CPS DISTRICT
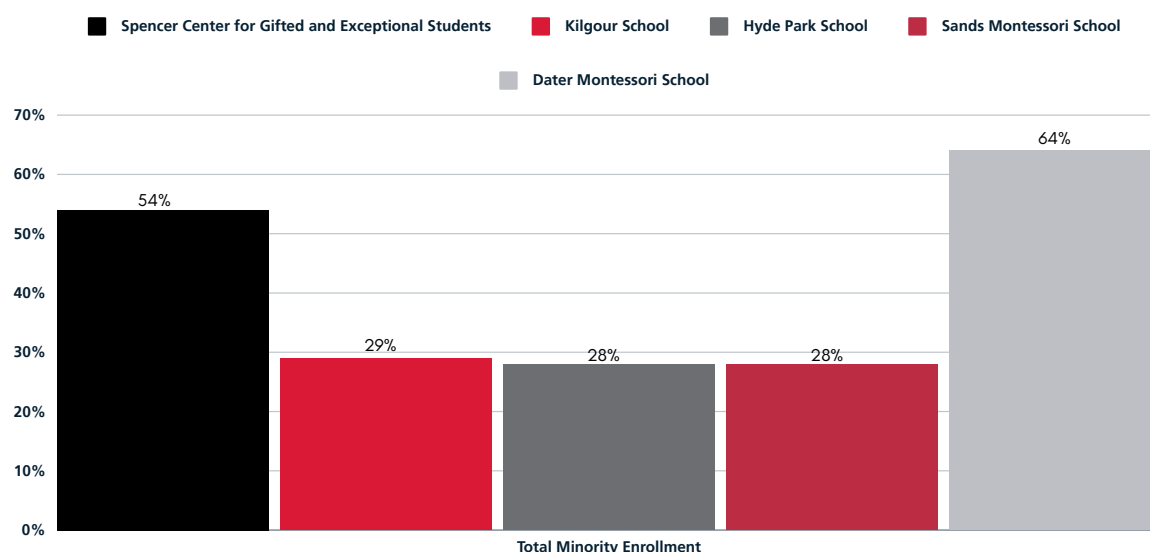
Source: U.S. News & World Report Best Elementary School Rankings Report Cincinnati Elementary Schools.

Among the top 3 elementary schools, Kilgour and Hyde Park Elementary are considered neighborhood schools that primarily serve students from Oakley and Hyde Park neighborhoods. According to the City of Cincinnati's Climate Equity Indicator report, both Oakley and Hyde Park are predominantly White neighborhoods.164 The population at Kilgour School is predominantly White, with a 29% minority population. Hyde Park Elementary School's minority population is 28%.

At the elementary level, the bottom 25th percentile consists of 11 CPS elementary schools, listed alphabetically are Carson School, Ethel M. Taylor Academy, Frederick Douglass School, Leap Academy at North Fairmount, Oyler School, Pleasant Hill Academy, Rees E. Price Academy, Roll Hill School, Rothenberg Preparatory Academy,

William H. Taft Elementary School, Winton Hills Academy.166

Of these schools, 8 have student-to-teacher ratios above the district average. Carson School has the highest student-to-teacher ratio of 20:1.167 All of the schools in the bottom quartile of CPS elementary schools have predominantly minority populations.

The data around educational attainment and intradistrict performance throughout Cincinnati's largest school district sheds light on the educational disparities and implications of racial segregation that led to the 1974 lawsuit, *Bronson V. The Cincinnati Board of Education*.168

Looking closer at the factors that impact a child's academic performance, we

uncovered yet another unsettling trend: absenteeism in Cincinnati is extraordinarily high. A 2018 report published by the University of Delaware Center for Research in Education & Social Policy indicates that chronic absenteeism puts children at a greater risk of falling behind.

Among researchers and policymakers, the most common definition of chronic absenteeism is missing 10% of the school year. Whether you adopt this definition or the more rigid 15 or more days per school year definition, there is overwhelming evidence that missing classroom instruction negatively impacts a student's academic performance.

Knowledge gaps caused by excessive absenteeism result in lower grades and lower test scores. Students, especially

BOTTOM 25TH PERCENTILE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN CPS DISTRICT
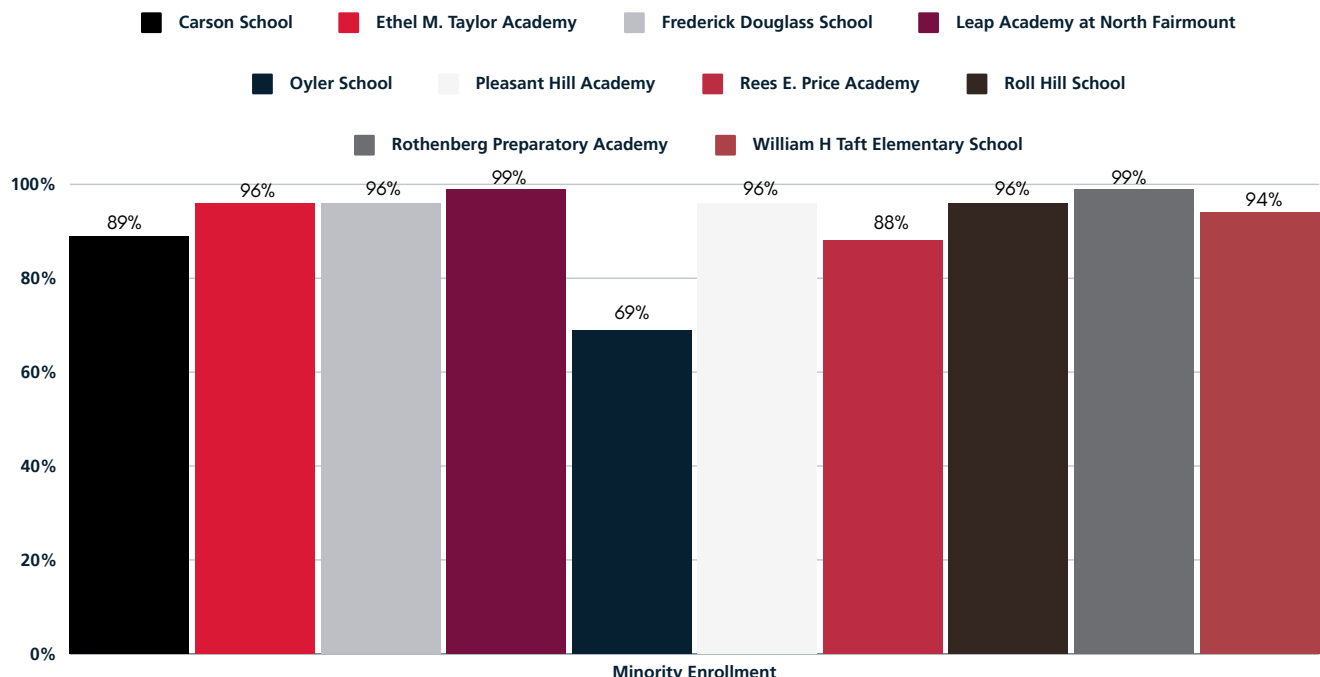
Source: U.S. News & World Report Best Elementary School Rankings Report Cincinnati Elementary Schools.

during their formative years thrive on consistency and repetition. Repetitive learning leads to increased skills acquisition. Missing out on this learning makes skills acquisition more difficult.

Researchers say that chronic absenteeism has a negative impact on 3rd grade reading scores. According to research published by Attendance Works in 2011, a mere 17% of students who were chronically absent in kindergarten and 1st grade were proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade. Comparatively, 64% of students with regular attendance were proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade.169

Poor literacy increases a student's risk of dropping out of high school later in a student's academic career. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2012 report on juvenile justice, students who were not proficient readers by the end of 3rd grade were four times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school. The study found that non-proficient readers who also experienced childhood poverty had a significant increase in their dropout rate from 16% to 26%.170

Missing interactions with one's peers drastically impact a student's social-emotional development. Students who regularly miss school have a lower sense of belonging and fitting in. Chronically absent students miss out on extracurricular activities including sports, clubs, and enrichment activities. According to a 2021 article published by UCLA School of Education and Information Studies, absenteeism has the strongest negative impact on the social-emotional development of middle school students.171

Research indicates that chronic absenteeism among older students significantly correlates with various negative outcomes, including increased risks of substance abuse, exposure to violence, and higher rates of juvenile delinquency. Studies dating as far back as 2004 have consistently associated absenteeism with adverse consequences.172

For instance, a 2014 report by Attendance Works, drawing from 2013 data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, revealed that chronic absenteeism among Utah students led to

dropout rates 7.4 times higher than those of regularly attending peers.[173]

Moreover, a 2019 meta-analytic review published in the Journal of Youth Adolescence synthesized multiple studies on chronic absenteeism and risk factors, highlighting a significant link between absenteeism and substance use.[174]

Recent research from 2022, published by the Academic Pediatric Association, established a correlation between high violence exposure and school absenteeism among middle school students.[175] Another 2022 independent study by the Washington D.C.-based Criminal Justice Coordinating Council found that students with higher rates of unexcused absences were three times more likely to be involved with the juvenile justice system.[176]

Collectively, these findings underscore the pervasive connection between chronic absenteeism and underlying issues such as disengagement from school, lack of parental involvement, or socio-economic challenges. Consistent school absence often leaves students feeling disconnected from the academic environment, rendering them susceptible to negative influences outside of school.

Since the global COVID-19 pandemic, chronic absenteeism has increased significantly. According to a 2024 article published in Ed Weekly, the nation's schools are experiencing a spike in chronic absenteeism. In 2019, 15% of students across the nation were chronically absent. The 2022 rate of chronic absenteeism in America was 28%.[177]

Using data from Cincinnati's City Health Dashboard, it is reported that 58.8% of public school students were chronically

absent in Cincinnati. This is more than 70% higher than the national average.[178]

Preliminary data from the New York Times indicates that the 2023 rate of chronic absenteeism in Cincinnati is showing improvement.[179]

Under Ohio Attendance Law (HB 410), families of CPS students who are excessively absent from school, missing 38 school hours or more per month or 65 school hours per school year, are placed on an attendance plan and provided with additional resources in an effort to improve the student's attendance. Students who continue to miss school or fail to adhere to the attendance plan are at risk of interaction with local juvenile courts.

A 2018 article written by Kevin Gee and published in the Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, highlights significant gaps in absenteeism rates based on race/ethnicity, poverty, and disability status.[180]

This theory is supported by a 2023 report released by Attendance Works indicating that chronic absenteeism rates are higher among students who attend schools with high rates of poverty.[181]

Impoverished families face significant challenges in accessing basic resources including transportation, healthcare, and stable housing. The US Department of Education lists the common causes for absenteeism as poor health, limited transportation, and lack of safety.[182]

According to City Health Dashboards, "structural factors, such as segregation, poverty, unpredictable work schedules, and interactions with the justice system,

Chronic Absenteeism (%)
by Race/Ethnicity Across Dashboard Cities
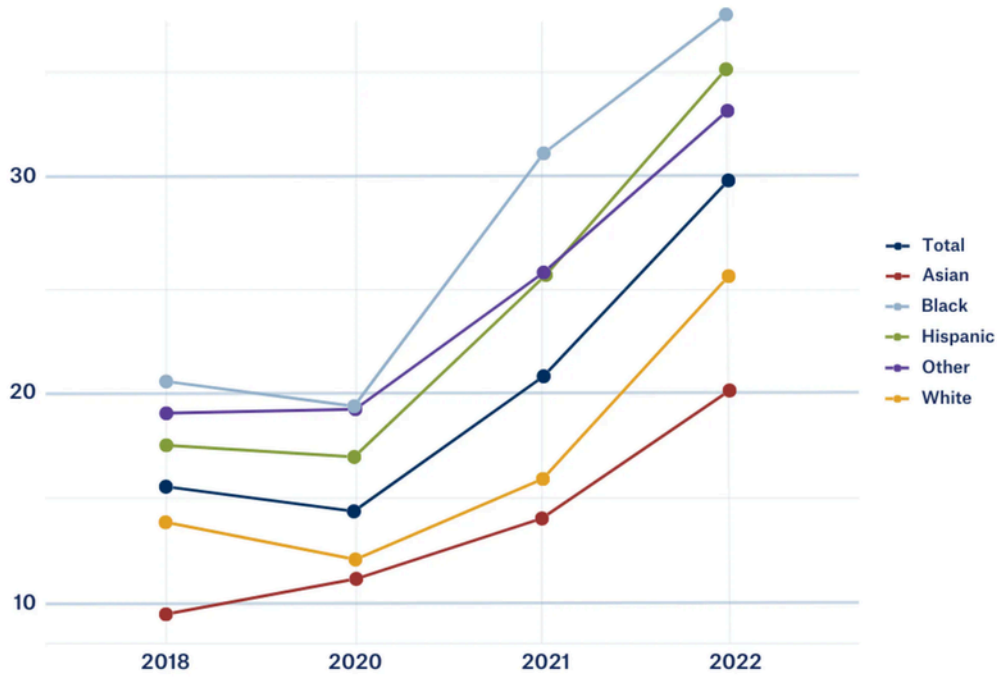
Source: Vierse, A. (2024, January 24). Chronic Absenteeism Trends. City Health Dashboard. Retrieved from https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/blog-media/chronic-absenteeism-trends

have historically contributed to disproportionately higher Chronic Absenteeism rates among some racial/ethnic minority students."183

According to Attendance Works using data published in the Journal of School Health parental engagement is the key to reducing chronic absenteeism.184 This proves extraordinarily difficult for economically challenged parents, especially when work schedules conflict with their ability to get their school-aged children to school. According to a 2016 study published in Children & Schools, parents' employment schedules impact a student's attendance when the parents work shifts that cause them to be asleep or working during times when the child needs to get up for school.185

A primary driver in addressing chronic absenteeism is the proven role that absenteeism plays in high school dropout rates.186 Improved attendance positively impacts high school completion rates which in turn increases the earning potential of residents.

In Cincinnati, the 2022 high school completion rate of 88.6% is comparable to other dashboard cities. High school completion rates have consistently improved since the release of our last report. High school completion is measured by assessing the educational attainment of adults over 25 years and older.

Adults who have obtained a high school diploma or equivalent or have obtained a higher degree positively impact the city's high school completion rate.

In the following section, we will explore the work that the Urban League is doing to improve educational outcomes in Cincinnati. We will introduce the collaborative efforts of the Black Caregivers Network and expound upon how the Urban League is advocating to increase engagement among caregivers from diverse backgrounds. We invite you to continue along on this journey with us as we strive to advance educational equity.

ULGSO WORK IN EDUCATION

"The Urban League firmly believes that education is a fundamental civil right"

In our ongoing mission to achieve true parity and equity within our community, the Urban League recognizes the urgent need to address systemic disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized groups. Among these challenges, educational gaps stand as formidable barriers to equal opportunity and success. However, we are not merely content with acknowledging these disparities; we are actively engaging in initiatives aimed at dismantling the root causes behind them.

The Urban League firmly believes that education is a fundamental civil right. At the heart of our mission lies a profound commitment to uplifting and empowering Black and other marginalized groups. In Cincinnati, where historical injustices and systemic inequalities have perpetuated racial disparities, we are taking bold steps to effect meaningful change.

We recognize the critical role caregivers play in shaping the educational outcomes and overall well-being of local children. The Urban League launched the Black Caregivers Network to address the specific barriers Black caregivers face. This initiative is not just about providing support; it's a catalyst for empowerment, specifically tailored to address the unique needs and challenges faced by caregivers within Cincinnati's Black community.

By fostering a network that provides resources, guidance, and a supportive community, the Urban League is not only addressing the immediate needs of caregivers but also tackling the underlying issues that contribute to educational disparities. Through this initiative, caregivers are equipped with the tools and knowledge necessary to advocate for their children's educational rights, navigate complex systems, and actively participate in shaping the educational landscape of their communities.

In essence, the creation of the Black Caregivers Network represents more than just a program; it embodies the Urban League's unwavering commitment to equity and justice. It is a testament to our belief that true parity can only be achieved when every individual, regardless of race or background, has the opportunity to thrive and succeed. By investing in the empowerment of caregivers, the Urban League is not only transforming lives but also laying the foundation for a more equitable and prosperous future for all residents of Cincinnati.

What is the Black Caregivers Network?

The Black Caregivers Network is a collaborative group of activated caregivers and community partners who work to co-create educational policies that lead to authentic community engagement. Together they aim to ensure that the process of educating our future generations is built on relationships and mutual respect. Using key metrics identified by the group, the Black Caregivers Network uses its Spectrum of Engagement as an accountability tool to advance education equity.

The Urban League advocates for efforts led by Black caregivers in 3 core pillars:

"The Black Caregivers Network is a collaborative group of activated caregivers and community partners who work to co-create educational policies that lead to authentic community engagement"

- Community Organizing - We provide leadership development to empower caregivers to advocate for policy change at the local and state levels.

- Public Awareness Campaigns - We work to actively raise awareness of key issues to increase the number of activated caregivers within the Black community.

- Caregiver Support - We offer dedicated support to help caregivers navigate complex educational concerns and issues.

In September 2022, the Urban League presented the Spectrum of Engagement to the Board of Education at Cincinnati Public School. At this time we explained that our parents seek engagement beyond the traditional engagement which is primarily focused on volunteerism. The Black Caregivers Network collectively created the 5-part system to reframe caregiver engagement in a manner that encourages shared responsibility between caregivers and educators and acknowledges the evolving role of caregivers.

During our presentation, we explicitly called out that caregiver roles in Ohio have changed. According to data collected from the US Census Bureau, the Annie E. Casey Foundation Kids Count Data Center, and the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis Reporting System, 180,000 Ohio students are living in kinship or granship households. A kinship family is defined as one wherein the child lives with someone other than their biological parent including grandparents,

THE BLACK CAREGIVER NETWORK

SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

INFORMED · INTERESTED · INVOLVED · INTERACTIVE · INVESTED

Moving away from an individual caregiver's or teacher's "job" to a shared responsibility

Moving away from events-driven engagement to results-driven engagement

Moving away from inconsistent, top-down policies to community-driven, sustainable policies

"We're committed to addressing significant health needs beyond our walls and achieving healthcare outcomes for all children in the region."

aunts, uncles, or family friends.

Each phase of the 5-part Spectrum of Engagement intentionally begins with the letter "I" to further demonstrate the importance of inclusivity. Caregivers and educators are encouraged to use this model to move from being informed to being fully invested in the educational process.

Informed - Includes caregivers who are informed about the school community. This is not limited to caregivers who are able to be physically present within the school. Educators are encouraged to use a variety of communication tactics to inform every caregiver.

Interested - Includes informed caregivers who attend school events, but may not be able to attend all school-related events. Educators can foster a greater sense of trust and inclusion by ensuring that interested parents have a single point of direct contact within the school community.

Involved - Includes interested caregivers who regularly attend school events and are well-informed. Educators can build upon their piqued interest by engaging caregivers in one-time events and opportunities to donate their time and resources.

Interactive - Includes caregivers who are willing to make decisions within the school. Interactive caregivers regularly interact with teachers and school staff. Educated are encouraged to provide caregivers with

additional opportunities to engage in decision-making beyond traditional Local School Decision Making Committees ("LSDMC") or Parent-Teacher Associations ("PTA") roles.

Invested - Invested caregivers are deeply involved with a strong presence in the school, not just in their child's classroom. Invested caregivers often attend board and committee meetings. Educators should encourage invested caregivers to directly connect with Board Members and elected officials.

During the September 2022 presentation, the Urban League shared our survey findings wherein we collected data from 187 CPS caregivers from 5 area CPS elementary schools throughout the district. It is important to note that though we were not able to survey caregivers from every CPS school, the schools surveyed represented each area within the CPS district including Eastside, Westside and Center City Cincinnati.

According to our survey findings, local caregivers want to be seen, valued and heard. As part of our advocacy on behalf of caregivers, we asked the school board to fully adopt the Spectrum of Engagement. To demonstrate that they value all caregivers, we asked the school board to redesign its parent-teacher conference model from a set time and date to an all-day engagement as well as provide virtual options. Furthermore, we asked the school board to include

"the Urban League works to ensure that young people have a voice in creating meaningful solutions"

caregivers in the principal selection process.

Furthermore, the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio is working alongside our affiliate partners throughout the country attempting to empower caregivers and those who support students. In November 2022, our Head of Policy and Advocacy, Jasmine Coaston, and key members of the Black Caregivers Network attended the Building Public Will In Equity convening session hosted by the National Urban League. In addition to sharing our success with the Black Caregivers Network, we gained insights on best practices from other Urban League affiliates and how they are addressing the educational needs of Black families.

Among the key takeaways, was the work that the Urban League of Nebraska is doing in partnership with middle school and high school communities. In Nebraska, they have spearheaded the Youth Attendance Navigators, a court-recognized diversion program that empowers young people to create solutions to address education equity.

Amplifying Youth Voices Through Urban Champions

Recognizing the unique challenges that today's youth face, the Urban League works to ensure that young people have a voice in creating meaningful solutions. Established in 2016, Urban Champions is a youth-led initiative incorporating leadership development, career readiness, and violence prevention. Geared toward young people

aged 11 through 19 living in vulnerable communities throughout Cincinnati, Urban Champions aims to empower its participants with the necessary tools and support to navigate personal and academic challenges and unlock their full potential.

Central to Urban Champions' mission are paid internships and bi-weekly career-readiness training, equipping participants with tangible skills and experiences to thrive in a competitive job market. Urban Champions further empowers young people to organize through an annual city-wide Youth Summit. The Youth Summit offers a platform for young leaders to amplify their voices and facilitate dialogue with adults and community stakeholders. Annually, over 200 local teens and young adults attend the Urban Champions Youth Summit.

Efforts to further amplify the youth leaders' voices have evolved into a podcast where youth leaders can speak openly about pertinent issues including education, community safety, and gun violence. In 2023, Urban Champions expanded its offerings to include mental health coaching and support. By providing tailored support to navigate academic challenges, access community resources, and develop personalized plans for success, Urban Champions equips its participants with the resilience and determination needed to overcome systemic barriers.

The Urban League's work to address educational disparities impacting young people and their caregivers exemplifies our

"The Urban League's work to address educational disparities impacting young people and their caregivers exemplifies our commitment to driving sustainable change in our community"

commitment to driving sustainable change in our community. We are not simply offering quick fixes to these multi-dimensional issues. Instead, we are empowering individuals impacted by these inequities. Together with our community partners and advocates we provide immediate support and foster long-term solutions that promote equity and opportunity for all.

THE ROOF

IS ON FIRE

In this section we will unveil the scorching reality of housing inequities in Cincinnati, it is imperative to recognize the pivotal role played by the Ohio Black Codes in shaping the city's housing landscape. Just as a neglected roof can catch fire, leading to utter devastation within a home, the systemic inequities born from centuries of racial discrimination have ignited a conflagration of injustice in Cincinnati's housing sector.

The enduring impact of the Ohio Black Codes, enacted in 1804, on our city's housing landscape cannot be overstated.187

The Ohio Black Codes were not merely legal statutes but instruments of oppression, designed to systematically disenfranchise Black residents and cement their subordinate status in society. They effectively laid the groundwork for a host of racial inequities that continue to pervade the city today. From discriminatory lending practices to the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste facilities and lack of investment in infrastructure, Cincinnati's legacy of housing segregation persists, casting a long shadow over the lives of Black Cincinnatians.

Housing inequalities exacerbate other socio-economic issues that Cincinnati's Black residents face. They hinder upward mobility and corrode the physical and mental well-being of our Black residents. We firmly believe that access to safe, affordable housing is fundamental in fostering a community where individuals can lead healthy, fulfilling lives.

Discriminatory Landscape In Cincinnati

Cincinnati's long history of deliberate housing segregation existed prior to the enactment of the Federal Housing Act of 1934, which legalized racially discriminatory lending practices throughout the country. According to the Cincinnati Financial Freedom Blueprint, The Cincinnati Real Estate Board issued a mandate in the 1920s explicitly forbidding agents from leasing or selling properties to Black individuals within the established White neighborhoods of the city.188

As part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, The Federal Housing Act of 1934 created a lending policy known as redlining. Under this federal statute, lenders systematically rejected loan requests and withheld investments from communities they labeled "high risk." These "risky" communities were in fact predominantly Black neighborhoods. Due to these discriminatory laws, Black residents were denied access to the financial resources necessary to maintain and improve their homes. Leading to a cycle of disinvestment and decay.189

Through 1948, restrictive deed covenants blatantly outlawed ownership and occupancy of various tracts of land by people not of the Caucasian race. Deemed to violate one's Fourteenth Amendment rights by the US Supreme Court in 1948,190 This language remains on present-day plat records, deeds, and legal descriptions of local real estate property.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968, enacted in the wake of the civil rights movement, this landmark legislation sought to dismantle the legal barriers to fair housing practices and ensure equal access to housing opportunities for all Americans, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability.191

The Fair Housing Act represents a crucial step forward in the fight against housing discrimination, offering protection to

marginalized communities and a pathway to justice. However, as we shall see, the promise of the Fair Housing Act has yet to be fully realized in Cincinnati, where the specter of discrimination continues to haunt many residents.

Black Residents Face Disparities in Forced Mobility

Forced mobility refers to the involuntary displacement of individuals or families from their homes due to factors such as

foreclosure compared to other racial or ethnic groups due to factors such as predatory and discriminatory lending practices, unequal access to affordable housing, and economic disparities. These forced displacements not only disrupt individuals' and families' lives but also contribute to the perpetuation of racial and economic inequality, resulting in housing instability, homelessness, financial hardship, and stress.

In Hamilton County, Black residents make

eviction or foreclosure. In the context of eviction, forced mobility occurs when tenants are legally removed from their rental properties due to various reasons, such as failure to pay rent, lease violations, or property owner decisions. Foreclosure, on the other hand, involves the forced sale of a property when the owner fails to make required payments.

Black communities in Hamilton County face higher rates of eviction and

up 26.6% of the county's population. However, Black residents constitute 42% of the renting population in Hamilton County, as compared to White residents who constitute 48% of the county's renting population. Based on an analysis conducted by Eviction Labs of eviction data from Hamilton County, it was found that 58% of defendants in all eviction cases are Black residents, while White residents make up 37% of the county's eviction case defendants. This data highlights the

inflated risk of eviction faced by Black residents compared to their White counterparts, emphasizing a significant disparity in housing stability.192

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, eviction case filings were temporarily halted in Hamilton County. Hamilton County Municipal Court eviction proceedings were suspended from March 19 through June 1, 2020.193

On August 3, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control issued a nationwide eviction moratorium, however, on April 1, 2021, Hamilton County Municipal Court stopped enforcing the blanket moratorium and began allowing cases for nonpayment of rent to resume.194

The amount of an eviction claim typically consists of unpaid rent, late fees, and tenant damages. Eviction Labs tracked the median claim amount beginning in 2020 and according to their analysis, as of August 2023, 26% of eviction claim amounts were less than the median rent in Hamilton County.195 This trend of lower claim amounts is indicative of aggressive eviction filing behavior. Indicating that landlords are expeditiously filing for evictions for partial payments, accumulated late charges, and damages placing an even greater burden on individuals experiencing housing instability.

Further analysis of eviction case data spotlights Hamilton County's serial eviction filers. In Hamilton County, eviction filings are not spread equally throughout, resulting in eviction hotspots. Eviction hotspots occur when a small number of buildings are responsible for a significant portion of the county's eviction filings. August 2023 data provided by Eviction Labs shows that 26.1% of eviction filings resulted from 100 buildings.196

The next page shows the top ten buildings from the eviction hotspot list. Of those 5 buildings are located within the City of Cincinnati limits.

While eviction data reflect immediate financial hardships impacting tenants, foreclosure data sheds light on deeply-rooted systemic issues within the local housing market. As we explored the data around foreclosures within the City of Cincinnati, we uncovered an alarming trend related to the disproportionate impact of foreclosures on Black borrowers.

Statistically, the rate of approval for Black borrowers is significantly lower than that of White borrowers. In 2020, Black borrowers received 17.5% of all mortgage loans approved in Cincinnati. In the same year, White borrowers received 67% of mortgage loan approvals. Comparatively, 30% of mortgage loan applications from Black borrowers were denied while 10.9% of mortgage loan applications from White borrowers were denied.197

In the unfortunate event that a borrower defaults on their mortgage payment, the bank has the right to file for foreclosure and if successful, take possession of the property secured by the mortgage loan. Other circumstances that put homeowners at risk for foreclosure action are delinquent property taxes, for which Black homeowners pay disproportionately high amounts, subprime lending, predatory lending practices such as adjustable rate mortgages and balloon loans, as well as legal and documentation issues.

When comparing foreclosure numbers in local neighborhoods we found that the top ten neighborhoods for foreclosure filings in 2016-2022 were Westwood, West Price Hill, Bond Hill, College Hill, East Price Hill, Madisonville, Avondale, Roselawn, Evanston, and Mt. Washington,

TOP 5 BUILDINGS WITH HIGHEST EVICTION FILINGS IN CINCINNATI CITY LIMITS

188 eviction filings by Cincinnati Ohio 101, LLC

owns 2960 Highforest Lane in the Mt. Airy neighborhood. Mt. Airy is a predominantly Black neighborhood

97 eviction filings by Four Towers Apartments, LLC

owns 2709 East Tower Drive located in the West Price Hill. West Price Hill is a predominantly White neighborhood

79 eviction filings by Kirby Avenue Conquerors, LLC

owns 5469 Kirby Avenue located in the Mt. Airy neighborhood. Mt. Airy is a predominantly Black neighborhood

60 eviction filings by Parktown Cooperative Homes

owns 831 West Liberty Street located in the West End neighborhood. West End is a predominantly Black neighborhood

58 eviction filings by Apex Apartments

owns 2960 Highforest Lane in the Mt. Airy neighborhood. Mt. Airy is a predominantly Black neighborhood

As of August 2023

TOP 10 BUILDINGS WITH HIGHEST NO. OF EVICTION FILINGS

2960 HIGHFOREST LN
CINCINNATI OHIO 101 LLC
188 Filings

2709 E TOWER DR
FOUR TOWERS APARTMENTS LLC
97 Filings

5469 KIRBY AVE
KIRBY AVENUE CONQUERORS LLC
79 Filings

3189 FERNCREST CT
CINCINNATI PORTFOLIO RLTY LLC
79 Filings

11755 NORBOURNE DR
NEW MILLS RUN II LLC
78 Filings

5861 ISLAND DR
WESTBROOK VILLAGE MHP LLC
63 Filings

831 W LIBERTY ST
PARKTOWN COOPERATIVE HOMES
60 Filings

5305 EASTKNOLL CT
APEX APTS OF CINCINNATI LLC
58 Filings

1560 SPRING PARK WALK
GLENWOOD HOUSING PARTNERS LLC
56 Filings

2372 WALDEN GLEN CIR
PARKTON APARTMENTS OF CINTI
52 Filings

Eviction Lab. (n.d.). Eviction Tracking System - Cincinnati, OH. Retrieved from: Vierse, A. (2024, January 24). Chronic Absenteeism Trends. City Health Dashboard. Retrieved from https://www.cityhealthdashboard.com/blog-media/chronic-absenteeism-trends

respectively. Using the City Climate Equity Indicator Reports we found that 60% of the neighborhoods with the highest number of foreclosure filings were predominantly Black neighborhoods, while 20% of the top-ten neighborhoods were predominantly White.

Among the potential outcomes of forced mobility and its unequal distribution impact Black residents is the overrepresentation of Black people in homeless shelters throughout the City of Cincinnati.

The historical legacy of discriminatory housing policies, coupled with socio-economic challenges, has created a landscape where forced displacement frequently precedes homelessness. As we delve deeper into the dynamics of fair housing, it becomes evident that addressing homelessness necessitates confronting these broader issues and prioritizing rapid growth in affordable housing units throughout Cincinnati.

Despite being a minority, Black residents make up the majority of the population residing in local homeless shelters. According to 2020 US Census Data, 50.3% of all sheltered unhoused in Cincinnati were Black. White residents made up 48% of the sheltered population. When individuals are unhoused, the barriers to economic stability often become insurmountable. Without stable housing, accessing employment opportunities, education, healthcare, and other essential resources becomes significantly more challenging.[198]

COMPETING

PRIORITIES

In this section, we will explore the intricate interplay of forces shaping Cincinnati neighborhoods, particularly focusing on the plight of predominantly Black communities caught in a cycle of neglect and subsequent gentrification. Gentrification, as defined by the Urban Displacement Project, is a multifaceted process characterized by economic revitalization through real estate investments and the influx of higher-income residents. This influx alters the economic landscape triggering rapid demographic shifts, encompassing changes in income, education levels, and racial composition of a neighborhood.199

As we explore competing priorities within our city, we are compelled to differentiate between urban revitalization and gentrification. A core component of gentrification lies in historical circumstances where deliberate policies fostered disinvestment within local communities. Practices like redlining, urban renewal initiatives, and misallocated tax incentives are central to creating an atmosphere where gentrification flourishes. Circumstances like the foreclosure crisis further weakened low-income neighborhoods' ability to guard themselves from these forces.

In the mid-20th century, many Cincinnati neighborhoods experienced a decline in White residents, who opted to relocate to suburban areas outside of the city limits. This phenomenon known as "White flight" led to rapid growth in the suburban communities, while it depleted the capital resources from the city's urban center. After decades of neglect, affluent investors seize opportunities within the urban core, revitalizing properties and driving up real estate values, subsequently escalating property tax burdens. This rapid escalation leaves long-standing residents grappling with inflated tax liabilities, while investors reap substantial profits and move

onward, widening the economic gap between these communities.

A 2020 article published in the Journal of Urban Affairs explored the cause and impact of neighborhood gentrification in two US cities, New Orleans, LA and Cincinnati, OH. According to the article, true urban redevelopment incorporates the housing needs of all of its residents and creates protective policies to ensure that low- and moderate-income individuals equally reap the benefits of revitalization efforts.200

Cincinnati Magazine published an in-depth article about neighborhood gentrification throughout the city in its October 2022 edition. In the article, they relied on expertise from a local organization, Community Building Institute, which has studied neighborhood shifts in Cincinnati since 1995. The article warned that several Cincinnati neighborhoods were at risk or showing signs of gentrification. Among these neighborhoods are West End, Avondale, Corryville, Evanston, Mt. Auburn, Northside, and Walnut Hills.201

West End Neighborhood

The West End neighborhood of Cincinnati is the most historic Black neighborhood in Cincinnati. According to the 2019 Fair Housing Assessment conducted by the Community Building Institute, the West End is the only place in Cincinnati where early Black families were permitted to live. 202

Cincinnati's West End neighborhood is adjacent to the Over-The-Rhine (OTR) neighborhood of Cincinnati. Parts of OTR share the same R/ECAP as the West End neighborhood. R/ECAP is HUD terminology used to define census tracts as Racially/Ethnically-Concentrated Areas of Poverty. OTR has been coined as the

*"To add insult to injury, gentrifying city neighborhoods are some of the region's highest opportunity neighborhoods—meaning they have good access to jobs, healthcare, education, cultural and recreational resources, and public transportation— but are most at risk of losing affordable housing for existing residents." - Cincinnati Magazine*203

poster child for neighborhood gentrification.204

Comparing US Census Data from 2010 to 2020, the West End neighborhood has seen a decline in Black residents and an increase in more affluent White residents.205 A major factor in this shift has been attributed to the construction of the FC Cincinnati professional soccer stadium in the West End. According to the Community Building Institute's (CBI) 2019 Fair Housing Assessment, neighborhood and government organizations are working to "mitigate the loss of affordable housing that may result in the increased market interest in the neighborhood." The report goes on to demonstrate the rapid increase in the median home sale price, which rose by nearly 24% from 2017 to 2018.206

Avondale Neighborhood

Just a few miles north of Downtown Cincinnati lies the Avondale neighborhood. Centrally located between two major interstate highways, Avondale is close to major medical and educational institutions. After the destruction of Kenyon Barr in the late 1950s many Black residents relocated to uptown neighborhoods such as Avondale.207

The 2019 Fair Housing Assessment attributes rapid shifts in Avondale to "investments in Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, the opening of a new I-71 interchange at Martin Luther King Drive, and the investments being made in commercial and office development along the Innovation Corridor at Martin Luther King Drive and Reading Road."208

While the Avondale neighborhood has experienced positive developments such as economic resurgence, infrastructure improvements, and increased community

engagement, persistent challenges remain, including disparities in income, education, and access to resources.

US Census Data (2010-2020) shows a 17% decline in the number of Black residents in Avondale and a 38% increase in White residents who call Avondale home. The number of Avondale residents with income levels above $100,000 grew from 2010 to 2020 from 372 individuals to 434, an increase of 16.6%.209

Walnut Hills Neighborhood

The Walnut Hills neighborhood lies east of the Avondale neighborhood, and, like Avondale, was one of the first places where Black families relocated after the destruction of Kenyon Barr. Walnut Hills is considered near-east as it lies just northeast of Downtown Cincinnati. The 2019 Fair Housing Assessment lists Walnut Hills as part of the same R/ECAP as neighboring Avondale and Evanston.210

From 2010 to 2020, this historic community experienced a profound evolution, shaped by a convergence of factors influencing the increased desirability of the Walnut Hills neighborhood to non-Black residents wishing to live close to Cincinnati's urban core. Grassroots initiatives, such as Walnut Hills Area Council and other neighborhood-led programs are making efforts to increase community-level civic engagement in hopes of empowering residents to play an active role in reshaping the Walnut Hills neighborhood.211

Walnut Hills has seen a significant decline in its Black population. According to US Census data (2010 - 2020), Black residents declined by more than 34%, while White residents increased by 81.9%. The median income in Walnut Hills skyrocketed during

the 10 years, rising by 52% between 2010 and 2020. Further exploration of census data shows that the period from 2015 through 2018 saw the greatest surge in the number of householders who moved in during this decade.212

Population shifts and rising property values and rents put many of Cincinnati's urban neighborhoods at risk of losing their Black legacy homeowners, long-standing businesses, and cultural heritage. Greater social fragmentation and a decreased labor force threaten our city's ability to compete economically with other similarly-sized cities in the region.

Furthermore, declines in Cincinnati's Black population threaten our city's ability to achieve racial parity. In a 2021 article, the Cincinnati Enquirer warns that "local experts fear this downward trend could result in less attention around Black issues in the city's political sphere and lock low-income Black people in poverty."213 The article goes on to warn of the impact of pushing Black residents to suburban neighborhoods which are less equipped to address their needs.

Holistically working to impede gentrification in Cincinnati's urban neighborhoods requires a comprehensive approach that simultaneously increases low-income residents' access to information and life-enhancing resources such as health care, thriving schools, and fresh foods.

In this section, we will explore techniques utilized by cities throughout the United States to address gentrification that could be beneficial here in Cincinnati:

Land-Use Solutions

Based upon the principles outlined in Gabriella Mickel's paper "Gentrification and The Cycle of (In)Equity – Using Land

Use Authority to Combat Displacement" published by the American Bar Association in 2022, the city of Boston Massachusetts uses land-use strategies to address the needs of low-income residents. A prime example is Boston's Neighborhood Job Trust which charges developers linkage fees dedicated to funding job training for Boston's low-to-moderate-income residents.214

Right-To-Own Solutions

Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Acts (TOPA) are laws enacted at the local level in various cities and states within the United States. These laws grant tenants the right to purchase the property they are renting before it is sold to a third party, affording them the opportunity to become homeowners or to prevent displacement in cases where landlords decide to sell the property. An example of this can be found in Washington, D.C. The Washington, D.C. TOPA law was introduced to address the increasing rate of tenant displacement caused by the conversion of rental properties into condominiums or cooperative housing units. The law aimed to empower tenants by giving them the right of first refusal when their landlord decided to sell the property they were renting.215

Inclusive Financing Solutions

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) play a crucial role in providing inclusive financing that can help municipalities combat gentrification and promote equitable development. CDFI's often offer targeted programs to support marginalized groups. Local governments often collaborate with CDFIs to leverage resources and maximize impact.

A 2015 Article published in Yes! Magazine boasts of the success of New York's Lower East Side's credit unions in supporting low-income residents through inclusive

funding. These Community Development Financial Institutions help residents start businesses in their communities and better support themselves.216

Predictive Analytical Solutions

A key element that impacts a city's ability to prevent gentrification is the municipality's ability to preemptively support low-income residents by implementing policies and initiatives aimed at preserving affordable housing, promoting economic stability, and fostering community resilience before displacement pressures escalate. Co-authors Bailey Andree and Shelby Green of Pace University, encourage cities and states to use aerial mapping tools to predict gentrification trends in their 2022 article "The Aerial View of Land Use: Preempting the Locals for Improved Housing Access" published in Property & Probate by The American Bar Association.217

The tension between urban revitalization and gentrification encapsulates the competing priorities that define contemporary urban development in Cincinnati. While revitalization holds the promise of rejuvenating our urban spaces and fostering economic prosperity, gentrification poses significant challenges related to displacement and inequality. Addressing these competing priorities requires a holistic approach that prioritizes inclusivity, equity, and community empowerment. By embracing these principles, Cincinnati can embark on a path toward sustainable and equitable urban revitalization, where the prosperity of all residents is upheld and celebrated.

ULGSO STRIVES TO INCREASE HOUSING STABILITY IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Greater Cincinnati

For too many Black Cincinnatians, housing is falling apart. It's too expensive, needs too much work, falling into disrepair, is just out of reach, being forcibly taken or at risk of being taken. The laundry list of housing problems runs deep, felt by renters, homeowners and unhoused. Black Cincinnatians feel these problems the most, a sign of the pervasive forms of racial discrimination that continue to impact our housing landscape today. Without stable housing, everything else falls apart.

At Housing Opportunities Made Equal of Greater Cincinnati ("HOME"), we believe that housing is the central hub of opportunity for building self-sufficiency. HOME is a nonprofit fair housing organization with a mission to eliminate illegal housing discrimination in the Greater Cincinnati region. HOME advocates and enforces housing regulations for all protected classes and promotes stable, integrated communities.

HOME became a nonprofit organization in 1968, the same year the Fair Housing Act was passed. For over half a century, HOME has been at the forefront of addressing new and evolving housing crises in our area. HOME's legacy of fair housing enforcement includes major litigation against housing providers for discrimination of all kinds, including filing lawsuits against banks and insurance companies for redlining communities of color

During the height of the foreclosure crisis and mortgage meltdown, HOME provided foreclosure counseling and worked to keep families in their homes. HOME's mobility program worked with landlords to accept families with housing choice vouchers to expand areas of opportunity. Through COVID, HOME quickly deployed private rental assistance funds and provided tenant counseling to prevent evictions and keep families in their homes.

Today, HOME serves around 3,000 clients annually with fair housing or tenant advocacy services, providing counseling and information about housing rights. HOME provides training and classes about fair housing to landlords, real estate professionals, and government officials, ensuring that housing providers know their responsibilities under the law.

HOME's policy and advocacy work advances fair housing and tenant rights at the local, state, and federal levels. Throughout its history, HOME has been focused on assisting individuals experiencing housing issues and ensuring all people have access to safe, affordable, accessible housing.

Let's not forget just how recent racial discrimination in housing was made

"Race discrimination ranks as the second most frequently reported type of housing discrimination, following disability discrimination"

llegal. As of the release of this report, the Fair Housing Act was passed only 56 years ago, making it illegal to discriminate in housing and housing-related transactions because of race, color, and other protected classes.

Today, we don't typically see the blatant forms of racial discrimination that were prevalent in years prior. But we do see race discrimination complaints. Between 2020 and 2023, HOME received 215 fair housing complaints about race discrimination. This accounts for about 14% of all fair housing complaints. Currently, race discrimination ranks as the second most frequently reported type of housing discrimination, following disability discrimination, which receives the highest number of discrimination complaints.

Discrimination looks different these days. Modern-day housing discrimination is more subtle, and often individuals don't even know they are being discriminated against. For example, a landlord says they no longer have an apartment available to a person of color because "I'm so sorry, someone else just rented it" masks the implicit racism. A mortgage lender asks a Black family for more documents they already submitted, verifying income and qualifications for a third or fourth time. A home appraisal increases the home's value when a Black family whitewashes

their home of any identifiable decorations or photos and a White neighbor stands in for them to meet the appraiser. An algorithm in a tenant screening system flatly denies applicants based on criminal history from 20 years ago without any consideration of the type of record or length of time since the conviction.

There are individual instances of race discrimination, but many of these barriers are systemic. There are countless examples of explicitly racist policies and systems that severely undercut a fair chance at equal housing for Black families and communities.

The disparities and data highlighted in this report indicate how race discrimination is perpetuated today. But just as historical policies and practices were designed to be exclusionary, policies and practices can be redesigned to be inclusionary. The system of racist housing policies must be recreated. We can correct these mistakes and work to overcome the impact of segregation.

HOME is focused on eliminating housing discrimination in all its forms and working to undo the legacies of segregation to promote housing opportunities for all. Throughout HOME's history, the legal assistance program and advocacy work addresses these systemic issues. In the 1970s, HOME attorneys filed the

landmark federal court case of Laufman v. Oakley Building and Loan Company that established that redlining was prohibited in the Fair Housing Act when the bank denied a mortgage loan for a home in North Avondale because of the racial composition of the neighborhood.

In the 1990s, HOME alongside the NAACP and homeowners filed cases against home insurance companies including Nationwide, State Farm, and Allstate for refusing to insure old homes and thus redlining predominately Black communities. HOME developed loan programs and down-payment assistance programs, operating one of the first Pro-Integrative Mortgage Programs which offered low-interest mortgages to purchasers who wished to buy homes in areas in which they would add to the racial diversity.

HOME showcased numerous Cincinnati neighborhoods that have successfully achieved stable integration. These areas boast racially diverse demographics and a blend of housing types, forming the vibrant tapestry of these communities. While we celebrate these noteworthy achievements, it is crucial to remain vigilant about the potential effects of gentrification on our neighborhoods. If left unaddressed, we face the peril of losing these stable, integrated communities, risking abrupt demographic shifts and the erosion of our housing options. As a city, preserving these hard-won gains is paramount to avoid falling further behind in addressing disparities.

Now, HOME's advocacy is focused on increasing and preserving Black homeownership through the Roadmap for Increasing Black Homeownership in Cincinnati and Hamilton County. With over 30 partner organizations, including the Urban League of Greater Southwest Ohio, the Roadmap has six policy priorities that increase and preserve Black homeownership, including:

6 POLICY PRIORITIES FOR INCREASING BLACK HOMEOWNERSHIP

- Expand lending to Black and low-income homeowners that is far and non-predatory,
- Support existing homeowners with loans and grants for home repair, foreclosure prevention, and legal counsel,
- Modify zoning to be more inclusive,

- Provide property tax relief to low-income homeowners,
- Modify tax abatement incentives to support Black homeowners, and
- Monitor progress and data on Black homeownership.

ULSGO Strives to Increase Housing Stability In Communities of Color

"Market conditions make it exceedingly difficult to become a homeowner and are threatening our existing legacy homeowners"

While there has been progress on policies and funding to support the Roadmap priorities, the market is working against us. Market conditions make it exceedingly difficult to become a homeowner and are threatening our existing legacy homeowners. Housing prices have skyrocketed, and the limited supply of affordable homeownership opportunities pushes new homeowners out of reach.

Property taxes have spiked, especially for older legacy homeowners in communities of color. The conclusion of pandemic-era relief for mortgage assistance, property tax assistance, and home repair grants puts existing homeowners at risk of losing homes. We must remain focused on preserving the legacy of Black homeowners who purchased homes, invested in neighborhoods, raised future generations, and built wealth and equity through homeownership.

As part of HOME's work on the Roadmap, HOME is examining mortgage lending data and investigating mortgage practices of lenders. Financial institutions play a significant role in determining who has access to credit for home purchases and home improvement. HOME will be working to ensure that banks are meeting their obligations under fair lending and community reinvestment requirements.

Equitable property tax assessments are another high priority recommendation from the Roadmap. Contrary to belief, not all neighborhoods in Hamilton County saw an increase in property taxes. There is significant racial and income inequality in property taxes, and communities of color are bearing the cost. HOME is advocating for targeted property tax relief, as well as changes to the processes and policies to make it equitable and preserve Black homeownership specifically.

On all fronts, HOME will be advocating for support to homeownership programs and services that best overcome the legacy of redlining and discriminatory lending practices. HOME is also committed to ongoing monitoring of Black homeownership in Cincinnati and tracking progress made on the Roadmap's recommendations. We welcome additional partners and allies in this work together.

As data in this report shows, homeownership is far down the road for so many. The American Dream is a dream out of reach when the roof is on fire or there is no roof. The affordable housing crisis puts all of us at risk. We must focus now on how to increase access to housing that is safe, stable, affordable, and accessible.

To make real progress, we need to be bold and make significant investments in policies, programs, and funding that are focused on real affordable housing. We must work to dismantle systems of segregation and re-create inclusionary housing policies. Considering the racist history in housing, racial equity must be at the center of these housing policies and practices. We must be creative, bold, and collaborative. We must remain focused on how to ensure all people have quality places to call home.

ELISABETH RISCH, MSW
Executive Director
HOME

QUANDAVIER HICKS SHAWN TONEY JIMMIE PATTON WILLIAM SEARS LOGAN WILLIAMSON

WILLIAM LEMMON JACQUARIUS M. ROBINSON CONNOR BETTS HENRY GREEN V JAMES W. GROSS

ABDUL RAZAK ALI ARTAN MICHAEL LEE MORRIS JASON THOMAS CHRISTIAN AMANUEL DAGEBO

JUNIUS THOMAS KEITH BURKHOLDER RODNEY ARNEZ BARNES BRIAN PUSKAS CORTEZ LEE BOGAN

CHARLES WHITE LARRY DUNHAM QUINCY J. PRITCHETT MICDUFF LAMARCO ROBINSON DAVID PARKER

DANA DUBOSE WILLIAM RESTO DALE SLOCUM

DONALD EDWIN SAUNDERS AARON PIERRE THOMAS LEONARD BREWINGTON

JOSHUA FRANKLIN ROBERTS JUNIUS THOMAS III JEREMIAH WISE MATTHEW J. MORSE

SHANE MARSH JAMES WILLIAMS KENNETH CHERRY

SEAN MICHAEL HINTON ALEX JOHNSON ELIZABETH A. DELANO WILLIAM GARDNER

MAURICE BROWN BENJAMIN AILSTOCK

TA'KIYA YOUNG TYRE KING WILLIAM BRIGHAM CHRISTOPHER ALLEN BOGGESS

RICHARD SCHNEIDER FRED H. WILD III MICHAEL TUCK CARLUMANDARLO ZARAMO

WILLIAM PORUBSKY ASHLEY SIDES KESHARN K. BURNEY KAWME DEJUAN PATRICK OMAR ALI

KAREEM ALI NADIR JONES HAYDEN J. STUTZ PAUL GASTON

TERENA NICOLE THURMAN

ISAIAH ROBINSON

SHELLY PORTER III

LUKE O. STEWART

MICHAEL CLIFTON

JAMES CLAY

EDWARD TAYLOR

ROUVEN LOCH

DWIGHT DEARTH

TYLER M. JONES

DAMON BARSTAD

JEREMY LINHART

RECK

ROBERT TENBRICK KAITLIN MARIE DEMEO CHRISTOPHER SCHMITT

JEFFREY FINDLAY ABADI GEBREGZIBER STEVEN TYLER REED DEREK STOKES ROBERT TALBERT

TASJON TYREEK OSBOURNE EDUARDO PARRA VIGIL WOLFORD COREY CORDOVA DARRELL J. BRUFFY

PRINCE JONES JULIUS ERVIN TATE JR. GARY BROWN CAMILLE WEEMS KEVIN NICKLE

ANTONIO LEVISON MONTAE SHACKLEFORD JAMES AARON HAYNES VICTOR LYKINS ROBERT EDWARDS

RANDALL LOCKABY BRANDON JONES MATTHEW TODHUNTER ROY DALE EVANS JR.

MOHAMMAD JAMAL ISAIFAN DONNA CASTLEBERRY SEAN ROWE ANTHONY D. WILLIAMS

BRET ANDREWS JOY ANN TAYLOR-GRAHAM JASON MEANS PAMELA CROSTON STEPHAUN JONES

JONATHAN COLLEY BRETT LUENGO OMAR SANTA-PEREZ RONALD SMITH

JASON MARBLE MICHAEL SPENCER THEODORE JOHNSON NICHOLAS MITCHELL VINCENT PALMA

JUSTIN D. MCHENRY JOSEPH EDWARD HAYNES COREY C. ANDREW JEFFREY JOSEPH NEFF

TYLER JONES ZACHARY FORNASH ANDREW HOGAN TREPIERRE HUMMONS

BILLY G. HEETER PHILIP HASAN

SAMUEL DUBOSE   JOSHUA JAMES BROWN   DEWAYNE TAYLOR   ANTHONY WILLIAMS

DOUGLAS C. BARTON   DONTA STEWART   ABDIRAHMAN SALAD   VINCENT BELMONTE   RODNEY J. GEISER

POZZ STIBLIN   ANDRE MAURICE HILL   DATWAUN KAIN CATCHINGS   ANDREW TEAGUE

RICHARD JEAN POULIN   JOSEPH JEWELL   JOHN MCLAUGHLIN   INNES LEE JR.

CHAD NICOLIA   HUSTES DAVILA   MA'KHIA BRYANT   PATRICK HORTON   KYLE ANTHONY VEYON

TODD I. JORDAN   RICHARD LATIMER   SHAWN M. THOMAS   ROBERT ROOKER   ALONZO NESBY

CASEY CHRISTOPHER GOODSON JR.   RYAN A. PROBST   FREDRICK A. THOMAS   THOMAS CROMWELL

BENARD RUSSELL   ROBERT TINCHER   DESMOND ESKRIDGE   MICHAEL CRADDOCK   TIMMY WILSON

RANDY WILHELM   MAALIK ROQUEMORE   MICHAEL WHITMER   DOUGLAS RASH

CHARLES CRANDALL   JOHN ANDERSON   JAMARCO MCSHANN   ELIJAH ISHAM

BENJAMIN P. COTTON   WILLIAM E. BEACH JR.   EVERETT M. MARTIN   BRADLEY WILHELM

CHARLES L. COOK   MARK SHEPPARD   SAIF NASSER MUBAREK ALAMERI   ROBERT SIKON III

MICHAEL WILSON-SALZL   GEORGE APPLEBY   DUSTIN BOOTH   ARTHUR KEITH   TERRY FROST

MICHAEL S. MARTIN

JUN WANG

JOHN VIK

ONING

ED HOLUP

ELAINE HELMAN

EVAN COX   ABDISAMAD ISMAIL   KALEB ALEXANDER   GUSTAVO PONCE-GALON

DEWAYNE TACKETT   ANTWAN LINDSEY   DEAUNTE LAMAR BELL   JAYLAND WALKER

MOHAMED BARRY   TROY KIRK   DONTAE L. MARTIN   AARON CLIFFORD FIKE   AUSTIN HUNTZINGER

RODNEY BARNES   BARRY KIRK   JASON HOOPS   DOUGLAS YON   ERIC JAMAR LUPAIN STROMER

DAVID L. WARD JR.   KISHA ARRONE   CHRISTOPHER CARTER   RANDALL FIFE

SCOTT S. WRIGHT   MARK EVERS   JAMIE DAVID OVERSTREET   CRAIG WRIGHT   MITCHELL SIMMONS

DAVID ARTHUR   THOMAS HIRKO   JASON SMITH   ZACHARY D. ZORAN

JERMONTE FLETCHER   KELLEY BRANDON FORTE   FREDERICK H. HALL   JAMES SHEETS

JONATHAN LEGG   HASHIM HANIF IBN ABDUL-RASHEED   MATTHEW BURROUGHS

MICHAEL J. BRENNAN   ERICA LAURO   TRAVIS W. HELLINGER   JAMES TOBER SR.

ZACHARY BRYSON   MARVIN CREMEANS   DAVID ORLANDO ANDRADE GOMEZ   CHRISTOPHER MILLS

RICKY W. SHIFFER   DONOVAN LEWIS

JAWARI PORTER   TYLER GERKEN   THOMAS NOCK   MARESE V. COLLINS   JACOB FAULKNER

Introduction

Since the release of our 2015 report, the spotlight has increasingly focused on the urgent need for criminal justice reform across the United States. Cincinnati is no exception. The Reckoning, is more than the title of this section, it signifies a profound and necessary confrontation of the deep-rooted injustices that have long plagued our community.

As you turned the page to this section, you were greeted by a poignant image: the names of hundreds of individuals who have died as a result of police-involved shootings throughout Ohio. This visual representation serves as a somber reminder of the human cost behind the statistics shared in this report, each name a story of a life cut short and a community impacted. We ask that you allow these names to serve as a testament to the urgent need for systemic change and a call to action for justice and accountability.

The Reckoning is not just a reflection of our past failures; it is a beacon of hope for a more just and equitable future. This section aims to explore the complexities of criminal justice reform through the lens of Black Cincinnatians. In this section, we will highlight the historical context, examine current challenges, and celebrate efforts that have been made toward a more equitable and just system. By acknowledging the past and addressing the present, we aim to pave the way for a future where justice is truly blind, and every individual is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

Let us honor those who have lost their lives by committing to meaningful change and ensuring that their stories drive us toward a better tomorrow.

In our 2015 report, our primary focus was

on mass incarceration rates related to adults in Ohio and the implication of such on the Black family structure. In this report, we will expound on mass incarceration by including data on racial disparities within the Ohio Department of Youth Services, the agency responsible for the confinement and rehabilitation of minors who are convicted of a crime in Ohio. Furthermore, this report will shine a light on the continual efforts to address police-community relations and provide insights on the Refresh Agreement to the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement.

Before delving into the statistics, it's crucial to understand the various commitment levels of the local criminal justice system, particularly the roles of Hamilton County and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. Cincinnati, as the largest city in Hamilton County, operates within Ohio's legal framework. Those detained in Cincinnati are primarily held at the Hamilton County Justice Center during pretrial stages. Upon conviction in Hamilton County Municipal Court, individuals may either be required to serve their sentence locally in the county or community-based jails ("jail"), or the court may send them to one of the state's penitentiaries ("prison") operated by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections. In some instances, rather than be fully committed to jail or prison, some individuals are placed under community control ("probation"). Upon release from prison, some individuals are often placed on post-release control ("parole").

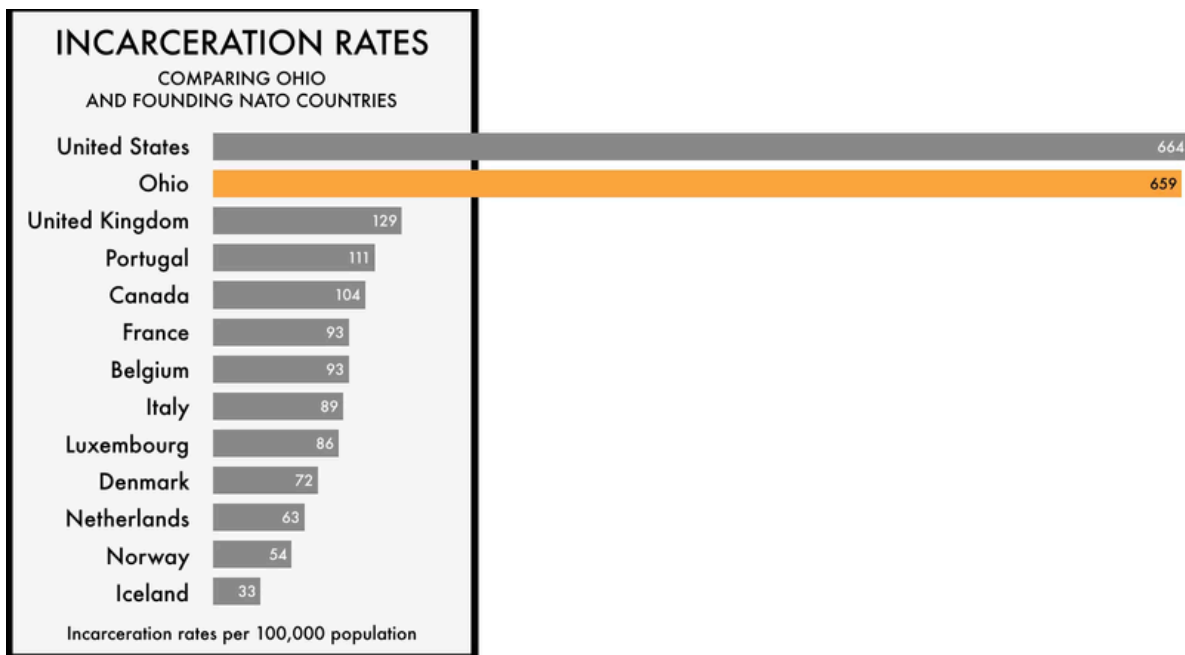## Ohio the Epicenter of Mass Incarceration

According to the National Institute of Corrections, Ohio has 108 jails across its 88 counties and 28 state prisons as of the release of its 2020 report. In total, there are 135 prison facilities in Ohio.218

Ohio Secretary of State lists 112 institutions of higher learning including 14 four-year public universities with 24 branch campuses, 23 two-year community and technical colleges and 51 four-year private colleges and universities.219 In Ohio, the presence of 20% more prison facilities than college campuses highlights a historical emphasis on punitive measures over educational advancement, revealing the critical need for criminal justice reform.

In Ohio, there are over 70,000 individuals incarcerated across various types of

Since the publication of our 2015 report, Ohio has embarked on several criminal justice reform initiatives, widely lauded as progressive steps toward equity and rehabilitation. These efforts include measures such as HB56,222 aimed at removing employment barriers, TCAP,223 which shifts the management of non-violent offenders to local agencies, SB66,224 expanding alternatives to incarceration with a focus on treatment, and HB1,225 broadening record sealing and expungement opportunities.

INCARCERATION RATES
COMPARING OHIO
AND FOUNDING NATO COUNTRIES

Country	Rate
United States	664
Ohio	659
United Kingdom	129
Portugal	111
Canada	104
France	93
Belgium	93
Italy	89
Luxembourg	86
Denmark	72
Netherlands	63
Norway	54
Iceland	33

Incarceration rates per 100,000 population

Source: Prison Policy Initiative. (n.d.). Ohio Profile. Retrieved from U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Status" American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

facilities including jails, prisons, immigration detention, and juvenile correctional facilities. Ohio has one of the highest incarceration rates of any democracy in the world. The incarceration rate is 659 per 100,000 residents in Ohio.220 According to Wise Voter, Ohio ranks fifth in the country for its 2021 prison population and third for its 2021 probation population.221

Ongoing Challenges In Criminal Justice Reform

Additionally, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the state implemented temporary measures to reduce prison populations. The ongoing revisions in sentencing for mentally ill individuals, the prohibition of life imprisonment without parole for juveniles, and efforts to diminish reliance on cash bail during pretrial detention are evidence that Ohio law is making strides to become more humane in our criminal justice system.

These efforts are commendable; however, there remains a significant amount of work to address the disparities plaguing the Black residents of Ohio. The data reinforces the need for further reform and the decriminalization of poverty, which disproportionately affects Black individuals.

Theoretically, the main role of jails is to house individuals who have been convicted of a crime, however in today's jails the majority of individuals are in the pretrial stage of due process. Using data from the Bureau of Jail Statistics, the Prison Policy Initiative found that approximately 70% of the 663,100 people in our nation's jails on June 30, 2022 were unconvicted and being held for pretrial, often because they are too poor to make bail.226

Incarceration rates in Ohio have skyrocketed over the past four decades. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, Ohio's incarceration rate in 1978 was approximately 100 per capita. As of 2021, Ohio's incarceration rate was 659 per capita.227

Black incarceration rates in Ohio have increased by 125% since 1978. Though Black people make up 13% of the State's population, the percentage of Black Ohioians in jail throughout the state was 34% and the percentage of Black Ohioians in prison is 45%. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, "In 2017, Black people were incarcerated at 5.3 times the rate of white people."228

Gender inequities in Ohio's prison population are often masked by reform actions that effectively reduce the number of incarcerated men but do not have an equal impact on the number of incarcerated women.229

According to the Vera Institute, the rate of incarceration among women in Ohio has increased by more than 600% since 1980.230

In March 2016, The American Civil Liberties Union ("ACLU") and Ohio Justice & Policy Center presented their recommendations to the Ohio's General Assembly Criminal Justice Recodification Committee. One of their key recommendations in criminal justice reformation is limiting the collateral consequences that restrict the earning potential of Returning Citizens.231

In our 2015 report contributor Stephen Johnson Grove presented evidence from Pew Research that Returning Citizens earn 40% less than before they went to prison. He went on to outline the considerable barriers Returning Citizens face in obtaining employment after their release from prison. This significant reduction in income creates a precarious financial situation that can hinder one's successful reintegration into society. The lack of sufficient income makes it difficult for them to meet basic needs such as housing, food, and healthcare.232

In 2016, the Institute for Advancing Justice Research and Innovation indicated in their working paper, "The Economic Burden of Incarceration in the U.S," that Returning Citizens earn less because of occupational restrictions, discriminatory hiring practices, and their lower human capital due to loss of social interactions during their incarceration.233

In their 2020 article published in the University of Baltimore Law Review, Artika Tyner and Dr. Darlene Fry, quantify the lifetime wage loss between Black Returning Citizens and their White counterparts. According to their analysis,

Black families are shortchanged by $65,472 over a ten-year period.234

Locked Out of the Future: The Racial Inequities in Juvenile Justice

In the United States, Black justice-involved minors face significantly higher rates of incarceration than their White counterparts. Black juveniles, particularly males, often receive harsher sentences, are more frequently tried as adults, and have less access to rehabilitative services.235

Incarcerated youth encounter numerous obstacles that hinder their skill development and social integration. Youth incarceration disrupts education, leading to knowledge gaps and lower high school completion rates. Beyond the stigma of incarceration, justice-involved youth endure trauma and mental distress. The economic consequences of their involvement with the juvenile justice system limit their earning potential and place added financial burdens on their families.236

In Ohio, overall youth incarceration rates have declined over the past 15 years. According to the Urban Institute, the number of incarcerated Ohio youth

dropped rom 1,679 in 2005 to 530 in 2019. Since 2005, the state has closed five of its eight juvenile correctional facilities, however, state spending on youth incarceration has only declined by 14% from 2005 to 2019.237

Black youth constitute 15.8% of Ohio's population, however, they represented approximately 56% of the Department of Youth Services' juvenile population in 2018. The vast majority of youth committed to juvenile correctional facilities in Ohio are males.238

Researchers Steven Zane, Joshua Cochran, and Daniel Mears, raised questions about societal views on the criminalization of Black youths in their 2022 study published in Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice. Their examination found that Black defendants are "perceived as more culpable and more deserving of punishment than similarly-aged White defendants." These views are demonstrated by the overrepresentation of Black male youths in Ohio's juvenile correctional facilities.239

A 2023 article published by Local12 News found that 85% of children who were incarcerated from Hamilton County in 2019 were children of color. The following

year, that number grew to 96%. In the 2023 article, we also learned that recidivism rates among justice-involved Black and White youth are vastly different. According to the article 57% of White youth reoffended and returned within two years of their release from juvenile correctional facilities. This is compared to 82% of Black youth. These variances elevate the need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the underlying causes of recidivism among Black youth.240

The number of youth from Hamilton County whose cases were transferred to adult court raises additional concerns. According to the Ohio Department of Youth Services, in 2015 there were 16 youth cases transferred to adult court. That number spiked in 2016 when 38 cases involving youth were transferred to adult court. From 2017 to 2021 the number gradually declined and then increased again in 2022 when 22 youth-involved cases were transferred to adult court.241

As our community strives to address disparities in Ohio's criminal justice system, we are committed to eliminating racial biases and ensuring equitable opportunities for rehabilitation and reentry. In the following section, we will discuss the Urban League's initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of criminal justice involvement on an individual's ability to earn a livable wage and support their family.

Cincinnati's Path to Reform: The Collaborative Agreement and 2017 Refresh

Understanding that Black residents of Cincinnati face more severe treatment when they interact with the criminal justice system makes it clear that we must reduce the number of interactions that a

Black person has with the system in order to adequately address these injustices. In our 2015 report, we introduced Cincinnati's Collaborative Agreement, designed to improve police-community relations throughout the City of Cincinnati.

Established in 2002 in the aftermath of civil unrest sparked by repetitive instances of police misconduct, this landmark agreement outlines a commitment to transparency, accountability, and mutual trust between local law enforcement agencies and the communities they are obligated to serve.

The 2001 fatal shooting of Timothy Thomas, an unarmed Black man, killed by a Cincinnati Police officer, triggered protests in Cincinnati's urban core. Concerned residents who were fed up with longstanding issues around police-community relations, including racial profiling, excessive use of force, and a lack of accountability within the Cincinnati Police Department demanded corrective action leading to an investigation by the US Department of Justice.

The Collaborative Agreement did more than settle the lawsuit filed by the Black United Front and American Civil Liberties Union against the City of Cincinnati, the Cincinnati Police Department ("CPD"), and the Fraternal Order of Police ("FOP"), it also resolved numerous cases of police misconduct and set the stage for comprehensive reform.

The key components of the Collaborative Agreement are centered around equity, independent oversight, and reduction in the use of force by CPD officers. Among the stipulations of the Collaborative Agreement are mandated de-escalation training for all CPD officers, the adoption of community-oriented policing, the creation of an independent citizens review

board, publicly available data related to police interactions, including arrests, use of force incidents, and complaints against officers, cultural competency training and increased diversity in CPD's recruitment efforts.

The DOJ monitored Cincinnati's implementation of the Collaborative Agreement from 2002 until 2008. While the DOJ's direct involvement in the Cincinnati Collaborative Agreement concluded in 2008, the collaborative efforts and reforms initiated through the agreement continue to shape policing practices and community relations in Cincinnati.

In 2017, the parties signed the Refresh Agreement which was designed to build upon the progress made since the initial implementation of the Collaborative Agreement and address evolving challenges and priorities in police-community relations. The Refresh Agreement addressed issues such as mental health crisis response, community-based alternatives to traditional law enforcement responses, and the intersection of policing with other social services and systems.

In 2022, Iris Roley, co-founder of the Black United Front, was hired as an independent consultant to the City of Cincinnati serving as the city's Sustainability Coordinator. In this role, Roley is responsible for facilitating interdepartmental collaboration and ensuring that the initiatives outlined in the Refresh Agreement are upheld.

By continuing to collaborate, innovate, and center the voices of those most affected by the criminal justice system, our region can serve as a model for reform efforts nationwide, inspiring a future where justice is impartial, rehabilitation is prioritized over punishment, and communities thrive in safety and trust, irrespective of race, socio-economic status, or background.

ULGSO WORK IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

"the Holloman Center for Social Justice stands as a symbol of hope and progress"

In 2020, the Urban League established the Holloman Center for Social Justice ("CSJ"), marking a significant milestone in our ongoing pursuit of equitable police reform. Located in the Avondale neighborhood of Cincinnati, the Holloman Center for Social Justice stands as a symbol of hope and progress. Our goal is to utilize the CSJ as a catalyst for transformative changes in three primary areas: policy change, community engagement, and transparency within police departments. The CSJ is a physical representation of the Urban League's unwavering commitment to partnering with communities in our quest for social justice and equity.

The center's focus on policy change aims to address systemic issues within law enforcement agencies. By advocating for comprehensive reforms, the CSJ seeks to establish policies that promote accountability, fairness, and justice. This work involves collaborating with policymakers, law enforcement officials, and community leaders to develop and implement strategies that ensure the protection of civil rights and the prevention of abuses of power. The CSJ's efforts in this domain are driven by the belief that meaningful policy change is essential for fostering trust and integrity within police departments.

Community engagement is another cornerstone of the CSJ's mission. Recognizing that sustainable reform requires the active participation of the communities most affected by policing practices, the center prioritizes building strong, collaborative relationships between residents

aand law enforcement. Through various programs and initiatives, the CSJ facilitates dialogues, workshops, and joint activities that encourage mutual understanding and respect. By empowering community members to voice their concerns and contribute to the reform process, the center helps to create a more inclusive and responsive policing system.

Transparency is the third pillar upon which the CSJ's work is built. Transparency in policing is crucial for building public trust and ensuring that police actions are subject to appropriate scrutiny. The center advocates for greater openness in police operations, including the implementation of body cameras, the public release of data on police activities, and independent oversight mechanisms. By promoting transparency, the CSJ aims to hold law enforcement accountable and to provide communities with the information they need to make informed decisions about their safety and security.

The establishment of the Holloman Center for Social Justice by the Urban League is a testament to our steadfast commitment to social equity and justice. By focusing on policy change, community engagement, and transparency, the center not only addresses immediate concerns but also lays the groundwork for long-term, sustainable improvements in police-community relations. As we continue to work alongside the community, the Center for Social Justice embodies the Urban League's dedication to fostering a more just and equitable Cincinnati.

"The establishment of the Holloman Center for Social Justice by the Urban League is a testament to our steadfast commitment to social equity and justice"

Policing In Hamilton County

In Hamilton County, there are 45 distinct law enforcement agencies. These agencies include 37 municipal police departments, 4 college campus police, our county sheriff's office, and specialized units like state police, highway patrol, and federal agencies. Following the murders of George Flyod and Breonna Taylor in 2020, heightened scrutiny of police around the county led the Urban League to conduct a comprehensive review of local police agencies, their policies, practices, and procedures. In 2021 we embarked on a data-gathering mission to produce our Policing in Hamilton County report designed to answer the public's questions and create a baseline for engagement in real police reform throughout our region.

To accurately measure critical issues in policing, we formulated a 57-question survey and distributed it to 42 law enforcement agencies operating in Hamilton County. Our questions were focused on police training, data collection and transparency, police equipment, accountability, and community oversight of police departments. We received responses from 30 local law enforcement agencies.

We found that 100% of law enforcement agencies track their use of force incidents, however only 23.3% of respondents post this data on their website. The need for increased accessibility was inherently clear. 97% indicated they collect traffic stop data, yet 27% do not disaggregate this information by race, gender, or age. We firmly believe that disaggregating the data would allow policing agencies to identify potential biases and sharing this information openly would increase public trust.

Two-thirds of the responding agencies reported having had at least one deadly use of force incident. The prevalence of deadly force occurrences in the majority of local law enforcement agencies raised concerns that indicate gaps in de-escalation training, policy deficiency, and broader cultural biases with these policing agencies. When we dug deeper into these issues we found that though 96.7% of police recruits receive some sort of de-escalation training, 43.3% of new officers do not receive training on how to identify and respond to individuals with mental health challenges and developmental disabilities.

Our findings around body-worn camera usage and the presence of dashboard-mounted cameras revealed inconsistency among local law enforcement agencies. Body-worn cameras are utilized by 56.7% of local police agencies. Conversely, 43.3% do not utilize body-worn cameras. In our region, 46.7 law enforcement agencies do not have dashboard cameras in their patrol cars. The most common reason given by the agencies that do not utilize police recording devices is a lack of funding to purchase equipment and cover costs related to the storage of recorded data. Unilateral investment in these technologies throughout all local law enforcement agencies would increase transparency and improve police accountability.

We invite you to read our comprehensive report, "Policing In Hamilton County" which can be found at https://www.ulgso.org/publications.

Exploring Greater Cincinnati's Reduction in Use of Force

Data surrounding the Cincinnati Police Department's use of force has declined since the inception of Cincinnati's Collaborative Agreement in 2002. Use of force incidents have declined since the release of our last report. According to CPD data from 2016 to 2021, use of force has dropped by 49.1% over the six-year period.242

The Urban League sought to better understand what factors impacted local use of force statistics. We reached out to community activist Iris Roley of the Black United Front, who continues to play a pivotal role in the implementation of Cincinnati's Collaborative Agreement. According to Roley, creating a community where policing is not synonymous with arrest is critically important. "We have seen a reduction in police interactions. In 2001, there were 35,000 arrests made by CPD officers. We saw that drop down to 11,000 in 2020."

In 2022, our quest to learn more about local policing agency's use of force led us to work collaboratively with Hamilton County Sheriff's Office. We collected data surrounding the agency's 100 use-of-force incidents involving patrol unit deputies at Hamilton County Sheriff's Office between 2020 and 2022. The CSJ conducted a thorough analysis of the incidents and found that Black residents in Hamilton County

disproportionately experienced incidents of force.

"Black men between the ages of 21-39 made up 59% of the use of force incidents reported."243

We concluded our research with a comprehensive list of recommendations to assist law enforcement agencies in reducing the number of incidents of force. You can read the full report labeled "The Use of Force Project" on our website at https://www.ulgso.org/useofforce.

Expansion of de-escalation policies - these policies need to include specific guidelines for interactions with special populations including children, pregnant women, people experiencing mental health challenges, and individuals with disabilities.

Activation of community oversight boards - empowering local community members with the authority to conduct unbiased investigations of police misconduct and review the department's use of force incidents. These boards should consist of members from diverse groups that are representative of the community population.

Address specific needs of marginalized

"The CPC's primary role is to build capacity within the community to address issues of crime, disorder, and quality of life"

communities - intentional efforts to reduce the use of force on historically marginalized communities, specifically by age and race. Proactive measures to prevent unnecessary force that is culturally sensitive to the needs of our youth, elderly population, Black and other marginalized groups.

Stronger accountability measures - implement strict accountability measures to ensure that officers who have demonstrated bad judgment, poor decision-making, or misconduct are neither hired nor promoted.

Enhance data collection efforts - ensuring that use of force data is inclusive of demographics including data to better identify individuals who are multi-racial and non-conforming gender options.

Collective Efforts to Address Community Problems

The Community Partnering Center (CPC), formerly known as The Community Police Partnering Center is an initiative born out of Cincinnati's Collaborative Agreement. The Urban League has housed the CPC since 2012 as part of our collective efforts to address community-oriented problems. The CPC's primary role is to build capacity within the community to address issues of crime, disorder, and quality of life.

The concentrated effort of our Community Engagement Specialist in areas where gun violence has occurred has demonstrated success in both community engagement and community outreach. Community Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP) teams consist of various stakeholders including local residents

schools, churches, businesses, members of law enforcement, community council members, and recreation center staff.

CPOP teams use specialized training methods including CPTED and SARA. CPTED training uses various tools to evaluate environmental conditions and utilize intervention methods to improve space and how it is used.244 The SARA model, which stands for scanning, analysis, response, and assessment, allows agencies to scan through multiple data sources, conduct a thorough analysis of a problem through the lens of the crime triangle, formulate a response, and continuously assess the impact of the response to the problem.245

Two notable initiatives that emerged from the Urban League's Community Partnering Center are the Hope, Opportunity, Choices & Consequences (H.O.C.C.) Mentoring Program and the Contagion of Violence, Incarceration & Death (C.O.V.I.D.) Violence Prevention Workshop.

The H.O.C.C. Mentoring Program aims to provide at-risk youth with positive role models and guidance, helping them navigate life's challenges and make informed decisions that lead to better futures. Through mentorship, participants gain access to resources and support that foster hope and opportunity, steering them away from pathways that might lead to negative outcomes.

The C.O.V.I.D. Violence Prevention Workshop addresses the systemic issues contributing to violence in communities. This

"The Urban League strives to create a more just and equitable Cincinnati, where law enforcement and community members work together to ensure safety and mutual respect"

workshop educates participants on the cyclical nature of violence, incarceration, and death, emphasizing prevention and intervention strategies. By raising awareness and providing practical tools, the C.O.V.I.D. workshop seeks to break the cycle of violence and create safer, more resilient communities.

The Urban League strives to create a more just and equitable Cincinnati, where law enforcement and community members work together to ensure safety and mutual respect. Our continued dedication to social justice, transparency, and community engagement reflects our unwavering belief that sustainable improvements in police-community relations are not only possible but essential for the well-being of our neighborhoods.

In August 2015 the Urban League released its State of Black Cincinnati: A Tale of Two Cities on the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act sought to enforce the 15th Amendment of the US Constitution, serving as a pivotal turning point in the history of American democracy. This legislation aimed to dismantle the institutional barriers that disenfranchised Black voters and was a triumph of the Civil Rights Movement's persistent struggle for equality.246

Unveiling the Echoes of Our Past: Lessons Learned from Cincinnati's Civil Unrest

The 1960s marked a pivotal era for Cincinnati, as the Civil Rights Movement surged across the nation. In 1967, the city bore witness to the uprising in Avondale, echoing the broader struggle against racial discrimination and socioeconomic disparities. The flames of discontent illuminated systemic injustices, igniting a fervent call for change. Yet, amidst the chaos, seeds of resilience were sown, laying the groundwork for a city determined to confront its demons and forge a path toward equity.

Fast forward to the turn of the millennium, and Cincinnati found itself once again at the crossroads of unrest. The death of Timothy Thomas in 2001 catalyzed a wave of protests, laying bare the deep-seated divisions and mistrust between law enforcement and Cincinnati's Black community. As streets pulsated with anger and frustration, the mantra of "No Justice, No Peace" reverberated, demanding accountability and systemic reforms. However, our city's true testament of resilience emerged in the aftermath of turmoil. Cincinnati refused to succumb to the shadows of its past but instead embarked on a journey of introspection and reconciliation.

Community leaders, activists, and policymakers rallied together, recognizing that true progress necessitated collaboration and empathy. Initiatives such as the Collaborative Agreement of 2002 symbolized a commitment to dialogue and transformation, fostering trust between law enforcement and marginalized communities.Yet, the echoes of unrest persisted, serving as poignant reminders of the work left undone.

In 2020, amid a global reckoning with racial injustice, Cincinnati once again grappled with its demons. The murder of George Floyd reignited dormant grievances, sparking protests that echoed the sentiments of decades past. However, amidst the chaos, glimmers of hope emerged. The city's response reflected a newfound resolve to confront systemic inequities head-on, embarking on comprehensive reforms and fostering inclusive dialogues.

As Cincinnati navigates the complexities of its past, present, and future, the lessons gleaned from civil unrest remain indelibly etched in our collective consciousness. "No Justice, No Peace" serves not merely as a rallying cry but as a guiding principle —a testament to the resilience of a city committed to equity, justice, and unity. Through dialogue, empathy, and unwavering resolve, Cincinnati continues to rewrite its narrative, transforming the echoes of unrest into a symphony of progress and hope.

Transformative Changes in Cincinnati's Political Landscape

In the years since our last report, we have seen significant developments in the political landscape, with both inspiring advances and disheartening setbacks. In this section, we will explore the current state of voter turnout and amplify the relentless efforts to combat modern-day

voter suppression. Like the cries "No Justice No Peace" which echo through our streets during protests and rallies, this report seeks to demonstrate the intrinsic link between equitable civic participation and social stability in Cincinnati.

In 2015 and 2018 Ohio legislators amended the processes for redrawing state and congressional legislative lines throughout Ohio. These changes

Changes in state redistricting practices directly affect voters throughout Cincinnati. By shifting the lines, the political power in our city is redistributed, altering who has a say in our decision-making process. The process known as "crackling" occurs when redistricting splits a local community into two different districts, as a result the political power of the community members is diluted.

In 2023, The Gerrymandering Project by Princeton Election Consortium using meta-

including HJR12247 and SJR5248 impacted for which elected officials an Ohioan can vote. Prior to these legislative acts, district maps were redrawn every 10 years by Ohio legislators, granting a political advantage to the controlling party known as gerrymandering.249 The amendments created a seven-person bipartisan commission, tasked for redrawing political lines throughout the state for state and congressional elections. The duration of the new political lines depends upon the commission votes.250

analysis of state election data mathematically scores each state's bipartisanship and evaluates the role gerrymandering played in the state's electoral process. The Gerrymandering Project scored Ohio's 2022 Temporary Congressional Map as a "D" on the state's report card. According to their analysis, Ohio's map unfairly favors candidates from the Republican party.251

The popularity of early voting in Ohio increased beginning in the early 2000s. In

Ohio, pre-election in-person voting begins the day following the voter registration deadline. Early voters may cast their ballots at their county's Board of Elections.252

According to a 2020 study published in the American Economics Journal: Applied Economics, Ohio legislation allowing in-person early voting passed in 2005. As early voting became more popular, further legislation to homogenize early voting was passed in 2012. The law standardized the number of hours that electorates could cast a pre-election vote in all 88 counties in Ohio. In 2016, 11.8% of Ohio voters cast their vote before election day.253

A study by the University of Akron using 2010 election data indicated that a quarter of registered Ohio voters used pre-election voting that year. The study found that early voters were primarily women, tended to be older, and of lower income and educational attainment.254

Proponents of early voting believe that pre-election voting provides voters with greater flexibility and reduces the barriers on election day. Voter turnout was found to increase by 0.22% per early voting day. 255

Early voting requires political candidates to start their campaign earlier and maintain sustained engagement through an extended period, resulting in increased voter engagement. Candidates benefit from early voting as they can respond to voter behavior and address voter's concerns more readily.

In the U.S., absentee/mail voting surged in the 2020 primaries

% of total votes cast absentee/by mail

2016 general	24.9
2018 general	27.4
2020 primaries	50.3
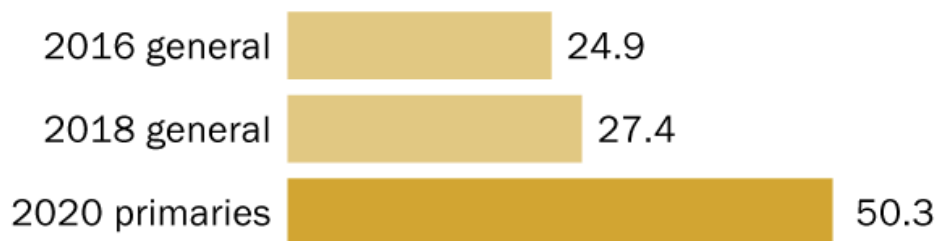
Note: 2016 and 2018 figures were calculated based on a Pew Research Center analysis of data from U.S. Election Assistance Commission's "Election Administration and Voting Survey." 2016 and 2018 figures refer to the same group of 37 states and the District of Columbia for which data was available.
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of state election data; EAC.

Source: Desilver, D. (2020, October 13). Mail-in Voting Became Much More Common. In 2020 Primaries as Covid-19 Spread. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from: https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2020/10/13/mail-in-voting-became-much-more-common-in-2020-primaries-as-covid-19-spread/

Ohio has often been used as a case study for early and absentee voting. According to a 2023 article published in Escholarship.org, Ohio is considered a no-fault absentee voting state.256

This means that a person does not need to provide a valid excuse for using an absentee ballot to cast their vote through the mail. Using data from the Pew Research Center, the article provides evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically increased absentee ballots, also known as mail-in voting. Across the nation, the percentage of absentee/mail voting for the primary elections jumped from 24.9 in 2016 to 50.3 in 2020.257

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout in Ohio, as in much of the United States, peaks during presidential election years and drops significantly in the following midterm and local election years. Since the release of our 2015 report two presidential elections have occurred in 2016 and 2020. Voter turnout for the most recent presidential election years was 71.33% and 73.99%, respectively.

The lowest voter turnout reported by the Ohio Secretary of State since the release of our last report occurred in 2017 when 30.29% of the registered voters in Ohio cast a ballot. 2017 was considered a local election year indicating that local and state elections occurred, but no federal congressional races were part of the 2017 general election.258

In this section, we will explore the factors that impact voter turnout. Many researchers believe that high competitiveness, concurrent elections, socio-economic factors such as inflation, and previous voter turnout play a significant role in voter turnout.259

Election competitiveness is measured by

the estimated variance between the top candidates. The closer the race, the more likely voters will participate in an election. The voters feel that their individual vote is more likely to produce the desired outcome. According to a 2023 study using 1986 to 2017 global election data 53% of researchers agree that highly competitive elections positively affect voter turnout.

Concurrent elections, defined as holding multiple levels of elections on the same day. In Ohio, the general elections often include local, county, state, and sometimes federal elections. The impact of higher-level races on local elections is positive. The logic indicates that concurrent elections receive more media attention raising voter awareness and interest.260

Voter resources play a critical factor in their voting behavior. Political scientist Jan Leighley, writes in her book Who Votes Now?, "about 80% of high-income earners vote, whereas only ~50% of lower-income groups do."261 According to political researcher Andre Blais, voter resources include more than just money, they also include one's time and ability.262

The role economics play in voter turnout during off-year elections correlates with campaign spending. In presidential election years, campaign spending increases and mobilization efforts increase. Researchers believe that the impact of these factors is short-lived. A 2018 article published in Electoral Studies measured the influence of voter registration drives on voter turnout and found that registration efforts close to the time of the election positively impacted the immediate election, but voter participation was not sustained. However, coupling voter mobilization and outreach efforts with other factors has shown to be an effective way to increase subsequent years.263

Across the country efforts to increase voter participation are rampant. A blog article published on US Vote Foundation's website stresses the importance of down-ballot voting. The article encourages voters to cast their vote in local and state elections as well as increase their participation during non-presidential elections as they argue these local elections are significantly more impactful than voting for the next US President. According to the article the impact of down-ballot races on issues like education, public safety, and infrastructure, play a significant role in shaping our local communities and driving meaningful change.264

Voting is an important aspect of the democratic process, but it is equally important for community members to increase their civic participation at the neighborhood level. Each neighborhood in Cincinnati has a community council tasked with making critical decisions in their respective neighborhood. In a recent discussion with UC Law, community advocate Iris Roley stresses the responsibility each community member holds in revitalizing our local communities. Through active involvement at the grassroots level, individuals wield significant influence in shaping the future of their immediate environments.

"I refuse to have my granddaughter, who you'll often see running around with me, fighting for the same thing that I'm fighting for. There has to be something in place that builds a better tomorrow for her, her children and then her grandchildren. At least a blueprint. But then there's a lot that goes into that. It requires some voting. It requires some conversations. It requires investment. It requires thinkers to be at the table. It requires a lot." - Iris Roley, The Black United Front265

In the following section, we will discuss how our community partners at the Cincinnati Chapter of NAACP are making huge strides in their mobilization efforts. Through grassroots initiatives and collaborative endeavors, the NAACP is actively engaging with marginalized communities to address systemic injustices and effect tangible change.

ULGSO ROLE IN COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION
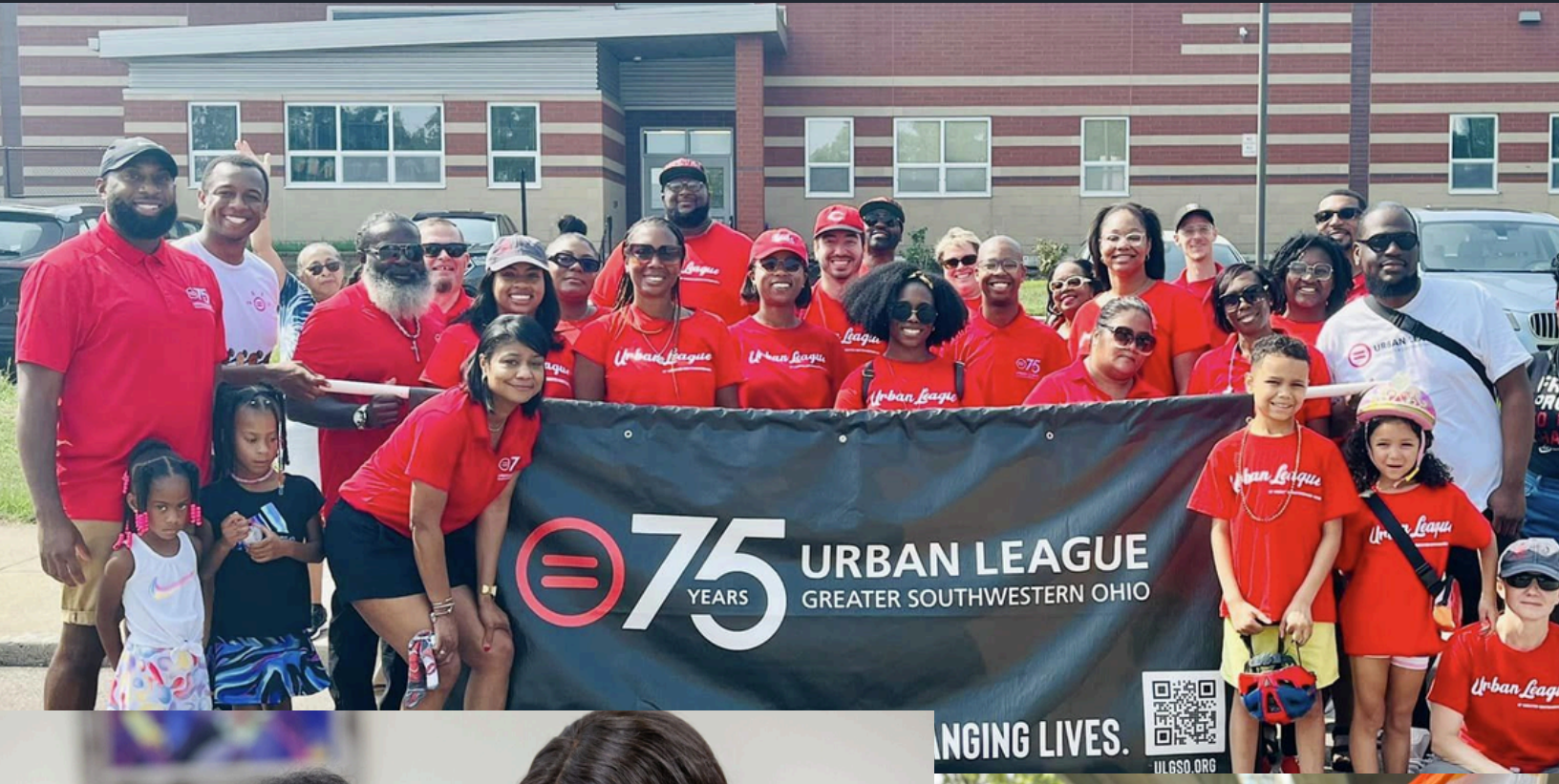
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

The NAACP ("National Association for the Advancement of Colored People") was established in 1909 and is America's oldest and boldest, largest and most renowned, most well-equipped and most respected civil rights organization that exists. It was formed by both Black and white activists, specifically in response to the ongoing racial violence which was taking place against African Americans around the country, particularly lynchings.

Our branch, the Cincinnati Chapter, was founded on February 12th, 1915, and as of the release of this report, we recently celebrated the 109th Anniversary of the enactment of our local Charter - of when the Cincinnati NAACP began leading the charge in The Movement on a local level, advancing the fight for equality and civil rights in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Over a century later, not only are we still going strongly, but we are continually stepping up our efforts, providing advocacy, lifting black voices, educating voters and increasing Black voter turnout, and demanding equity in various ways; as well as growing our membership. Each year, our Cincinnati branch participates in numerous community initiatives and has a presence at a multitude of local events. We also host various events and activities of our own throughout the year to serve our community and bring information, not only for our local members, but the

community at large. Most of the work that is conducted at the local level is carried out through the organization's committees. The Cincinnati branch has 18 active committees that are responsible for various areas of action to allow our organization to address the breadth of issues and respond to opportunities to serve the needs of our community.

We seek to build bridges between local elected officials and community leaders and the general public. We host public community political forums to allow constituents accessibility to the candidates who are running for office and vice versa. This allows voters, particularly Black voters, an opportunity to get up-close and personal with political candidates for office, to discuss the various political platforms of those individuals seeking to be elected.

We stay engaged with the candidates on behalf of our community, demanding a continual voice and seat at the table. As well as advocate for legislation and spending that will be beneficial in areas where we live, and in ways that are impactful to upon the Black and brown people who reside in Greater Cincinnati.

The Cincinnati NAACP has been consistently engaged doing the necessary work of educating voters and improving voter turnout, through canvassing and

"the CEU...will be used to educate, engage, and empower those in historically marginalized communities...to improve voter participation"

through canvassing and organizing to educate the community and assisting with voter registrations at our local office and in the field at community events. In addition to hosting the afore-mentioned candidate forums, we conduct candidate surveys to gather information to be shared with the community for various elections.

One of the recent accomplishments of our branch, about which we are extremely excited, is the launch of our mobile Civic Engagement Unit; a custom-wrapped vehicle that was procured to allow us to boost our ability to engage the public. However, the Cincinnati NAACP Civic Engagement Unit is a game changer, which will be used to educate, engage and empower those in historically marginalized communities as well as to improve voter participation.

It will allow us to meet people where they are, by traveling to various neighborhoods, to provide online voter registration, maintenance and verification, i.e., assisting with updating addresses and confirmation of voter status, as well as assisting with showing voters how to track their vote by mail requests and their ballots.

With our mobile Civic Engagement Unit (CEU), we will also provide voter education, particularly helping voters to

verify their polling locations and how to find their applicable sample ballots on the Board of Elections website. We will be able to provide this assistance in the field.

Our goal is to optimize the opportunity to participate in the electoral process for potential voters. Through our efforts we additionally hope to address voter apathy and to encourage more people to participate in the process of voting. The mobile unit is equipped with wifi, computers and printers and various forms and applications. The CEU was officially unveiled this year on the Founder's Day of the Cincinnati NAACP, an endeavor that would not have been possible without the support of our sponsors and partners, among them the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio.

Annual Events

Our local Cincinnati Branch embarks on several annual initiatives. We are extremely grateful to our members, volunteers, allies, sponsors, elected officials, community leaders, and community partners, such as the Urban League, , for their continued support. Among these impactful events is our Annual Women's Empowerment Luncheon. This event celebrates women who are leading the charge of service in our community.Christie Bryan Kuhns, the CEO of Urban League, is among our past

awardees, recognizing the Urban League's efforts and our collective goal of achieving parity for Black and brown communities.

Another initiative that our local Branch is excited to continue is our Annual ACT-SO program, a national initiative of the NAACP. ACT-SO stands for Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technology, and Scientific Olympics, it is the program through which our organization mobilizes the adult community to promote, prepare, recognize and reward academic and artistic excellence among high school youth.

The benefits ACT-SO students receive from the enrichment and mentorship components include substantial assistance toward the development of their ACT-SO projects and valuable tools to assist them throughout their education.

Additionally, we partner with our local Urban League to host our Annual Block Party for the benefit of the neighborhood where both of our local offices are located, beautiful Avondale. Another key initiative is our Annual 'Our Community, Our Kids' Education Summit.Together we assist Black students and families with the opportunity to succeed academically and in life by providing access to information to help them make good educational decisions. Parents and caregivers were

informed, engaged, and empowered to advocate for their children at school, and provided resources that will improve outcomes for their children's education.

There were presenters, booths, and experts sharing information on Early Literacy, Education Policy and Legislation, Educator Support, Gifted and Exceptional Education, Student Discipline, and Student Mental Health, intent on creating positive change in the local educational system. We hosted our 1st Education Summit in 2023, since then, our Education Committee has continued to pursue several of the initiatives that were a product of the Summit, and is excited to continue this work.

Then, there is our largest Annual event, our Annual Freedom Fund Dinner, which typically takes place in October, and each year is the largest fundraiser for our local unit. Our 2023 event, themed "Thriving Together," was hugely successful, and saw the highest attendance and financial support in our organization's history. This event helps sustain our work and allows us to grow our impact, expand our advocacy, and pursue the goals of our administration to serve the community through the fight for equality and advance our mission. Consistent support from our local Urban League office helps us continue these efforts.

> *"Above all we will advance the fight for civil rights, we will advance the fight for voters' rights, and provide voter education and related services. "*

Another initiative that is hosted by the local organization is the Cincinnati NAACP Annual Coat Drive which is hosted by its W.I.N. Committee, which stands for Women In NAACP, and is the arm of the branch which serves Women and children in the local community. Through which the branch sponsors an "Adopted Class" at South Avondale Elementary School. All of Cincinnati Public Schools are near and dear to our hearts but our special interest in South Avondale Elementary is rooted in its close proximity to our office, which is directly across the street from us, providing the foundational, early educational opportunities for the children in our neighborhood.

Through engagement with the students at South Avondale Elementary we seek to establish an early childhood experience with our organization, and to encourage good citizenship, a heart for community service, and a positive concept of our organization. Above all, we seek to address one of the practical and physical needs of students, that can even potentially be a hindrance for attendance - owning a warm winter coat.

For the past 5 years, our organization has addressed this need, at escalating levels. For the past 3 years, by gifting a brand new warm winter coat to every student in

the school; last year we provided approximately 350 coats, in conjunction with support of our members, the local Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, The Cincinnati African-American Firefighters Assoc. (CAFA), the local Chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., and additionally thanks to a charitable first time donation from Westco Bank.

In many ways, the work that the Cincinnati NAACP does in the community is tireless and far reaching, although oftentimes it may not be known. We are committed to providing active advocacy, and remaining a resource for our community and to for amplify the voice of the Black community, demanding equity and justice in areas in which members of the African-American community are underrepresented.

As we prepare for the future, it's imperative to actively engage young adults in the civic process. Our efforts to revitalize the NAACP UC College Chapter is pivotal for sustained progress. Recognizing that young adults are not only the future but also the driving force of our present, it's essential to involve them in civic engagement.

Their perspectives, energy, and innovative ideas are crucial for addressing

contemporary challenges and shaping inclusive, equitable societies. By empowering young adults to participate in decision-making processes, we not only ensure their voices are heard but also foster a sense of ownership and responsibility in creating positive change within our communities.

We will continue to engage local officials and maintain relationships with community partners for the benefit of the people of color in our city and county. We will serve women and children, to ensure equity in education, housing, and health. We will provide advocacy for our veterans, particularly members and past members of the armed services who have historically been disenfranchised. Above all we will advance the fight for civil rights, we will advance the fight for voters' rights, and provide voter education and related services. We will serve our community with true-heartedness and we are appreciative of the opportunities to do so in conjunction with our community partners, such as the Urban League.

SUSAN JOHNSON
**Chair of Communications
Press and Publicity
NAACP**

A recent article in the Washington Post[266] stated the following: "Amid growing legal, social and political backlash, American businesses, industry groups and employment professionals are quietly scrubbing Inclusion from public view. As they rebrand programs and hot-button acronyms, they're reassessing decades-old anti-discrimination strategies and rewriting policies that once emphasized race and gender to prioritize inclusion for all. It's a stark contrast to 2020, when the murder of George Floyd unleashed a racial justice movement that prompted companies to double down on policies aiming to increase opportunity for groups that have historically faced discrimination." This is the current landscape in which The Urban League sought to investigate how Black people in Cincinnati view Inclusion.

Inclusion for the purpose of this report can be defined as the deliberate and equitable involvement, representation, and empowerment of Black individuals in all aspects of civic life, including economic opportunities, social services, education, housing, leadership and governance. This involvement is essential for their full participation and contribution to the city's prosperity and well-being. It is a multifaceted and complex issue, often marked by a lack of consensus even within communities of color regarding the degree of inclusiveness in various sectors that affect quality-of-life indices for Black residents of Southwestern Ohio. Perspectives regarding inclusion are complex and will benefit from a deeper and ongoing examination of these issues in partnership with other organizations and through more targeted, issue-oriented approaches.

Integrity Development, on behalf of the Urban League, conducted the 2015 and 2024 surveys targeting residents of Greater Cincinnati, with the primary goal of gathering essential feedback to assess

inclusion, fairness, and equity within the community. We will use many different titles to describe the community the Local Urban League serves: Greater Southwestern Ohio, Greater Cincinnati and Cincinnati. Our team offers this report as a representation of the perspectives of residents in this community. It is not intended to represent the full story of inclusion for Black people, but an installment on what should be an ongoing conversation, embraced in every community.

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." - Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

2024 Inclusion Study Methodology

The Inclusion study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of inclusion dynamics in the

in the region. The methodology included a survey that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative questions focusing on inclusion, access, and perspective, followed by a stakeholder listening session. The closed-ended questions provided a structured approach to measure respondents' attitudes and perceptions, while open-ended questions allowed individuals to freely express their thoughts, facilitating the exploration of unforeseen issues or perspectives. Additionally, the listening session with community leaders provided a forum for important stakeholders to openly voice their opinions and concerns, encouraging greater engagement and fostering a deeper dialogue beyond predefined response options.

The results are provided in the form of strengths/good news and gaps/challenges for Black respondents in 2024 as compared to their responses in the 2015 survey. We have also provided key comparisons across race for 2024 survey respondents.

## A Comparison of Black Cincinnati Responses to 2024 & 2015 Survey Questions

We reviewed the 2024 inclusion survey quantitative results and compared them to those from 2015. This analysis provided a valuable understanding of the evolving landscape of inclusion, highlights areas of progress and persistent challenges, and informs targeted strategies for promoting equity and inclusion within the community. Below we have identified both strengths and challenges that surfaced through our analysis of responses provided by Black respondents in 2015 and 2024.

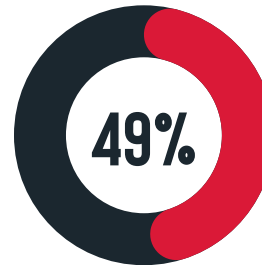## Black Respondent's Strengths, Good News and Trends

52%
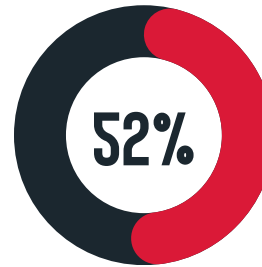
Inclusivity in Cincinnati

In 2024, 52% of Black respondents viewed Cincinnati as inclusive compared to 39% in 2015.

71%
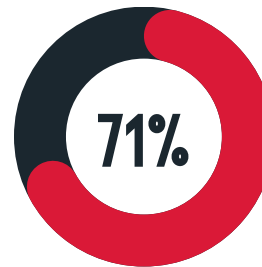
Quality of Life

In 2024, 71% of Black respondents rated their quality of life in Greater Cincinnati as good or excellent, compared to 59% in 2015.

49%

Job Opportunities

In 2024, 49% of Black respondents viewed job opportunities positively, which is up from 32% in 2015.

75%
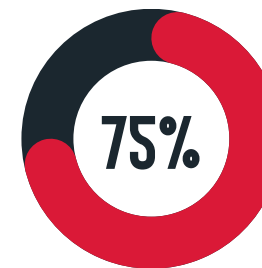
Access to Healthcare

75% of Black respondents rated their access to healthcare in Greater Cincinnati as good, with only 7% rated it as not good (not included in 2015 survey.

Black Respondents Gaps, Challenges, Opportunities & Trends
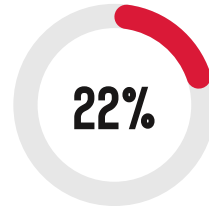
24%

Race Relations in Greater Cincinnati

Only 24% of Black respondents in the 2024 survey view the state of race relations in Greater Cincinnati as good, while 38% have a neutral view and 38% view race relations as not good.

22%

Perceived Level of Inclusion

In 2024, only 22% rated it as good, while 46% rated it as not good, compared to 33% and 35%, respectively, in 2015.

30%

Police-Community Relations

In 2024, 30% of Black respondents rated police-community relations as good, 25% as not good, and 45% as neutral. This is a decline from 2015 when 37% rated them as good and 22% as not good.

15%

Affordable Housing

Only 15% believe there are sufficient options, while 71% disagree.

31%
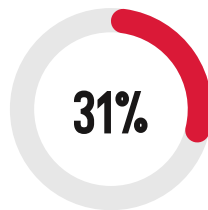
Access to Capital

In 2024, 31% of Black respondents rated their access to capital from lending institutions in Greater Cincinnati as good, compared to when 26% rated access as good in 2015.

Analysis of the Qualitative (Open-Ended) Responses

To gain a more focused view of inclusion, our survey sought to better understand pressing community concerns through five open-ended questions. These questions touched on critical areas such as affordable housing availability, experiences with housing discrimination, strategies for enhancing city-wide inclusivity, specific needs the Urban League should address, and additional thoughts on fostering a more inclusive environment. The responses provided some compelling insights, highlighting the urgent need for systemic change and targeted interventions.

Overall, residents voiced concerns over the scarcity of affordable housing in desirable locations, the barriers imposed by discrimination, and the necessity for more effective inclusion policies. Additionally, they offered constructive suggestions for promoting diversity, equity, and engagement across various communities. This feedback is crucial in guiding future initiatives and policies aimed at improving inclusion and equity in Cincinnati.

When asked, *"Do you believe the Greater Cincinnati area has adequate affordable housing options,"* most of the comments addressed the lack of affordable housing, the excessive costs of rent relative to income, the availability of quality and affordable housing in safe neighborhoods and near transportation. A few specifically stated that low-income housing concentrated in areas which were highly segregated. These challenges were noted by low-income families, seniors, and minorities, who also expressed concerns about the quality of housing that existed. Gentrification was a noted concern due to the increase in rent, property cost and property taxes. Gentrification has pushed those individuals seeking affordable housing out of the city. Service workers cannot afford to live where they work. Lastly, there is a need for more supportive policies and actions to address the housing crisis effectively.

Quotes About Affordable Housing Options in Greater Cincinnati

- *"Rent is more expensive than mortgages and homeownership is nearly unattainable for the middle class."*
- *"They are moving people out of their homes and communities, who cannot afford the replacements."*
- *"The income levels are not keeping up with the demands of the rental cost."*
- *"Purchasing is almost impossible & renting takes at least 50 percent of income."*
- *"The only areas that seem to have affordable housing are in places that are unsafe and do not have good transportation."*
- *"Much of the new construction is limited to luxury apartments with prices that rival the west and east coasts."*

When asked *"In the past year, have you or someone you know faced housing discrimination in the Greater Cincinnati area based on race, gender, disability, or other factors,"* over 220 people identified significant concerns about discrimination, financial challenges, and specific needs of our vulnerable groups.

Discrimination based on race, background, disability, and family status were identified with individuals facing obstacles in selling homes, securing mortgages, renting, and even maintaining safe living conditions.

Racial discrimination affects everything from home pricing to renting, to substantial barriers to individuals with criminal records or children. Financial challenges with rent increases push some into homelessness and make affordable living unattainable for others, particularly in areas where standards of occupancy are being raised.

Additionally, there were concerns for better support and protection for vulnerable populations, especially the elderly, who are often forced out of their homes due to various forms of discrimination and economic pressures. These insights collectively underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions and policy changes to address the systemic inequities and hardships faced by marginalized communities in the current housing market.

Quotes About Housing Discrimination in Greater Cincinnati

- *"A family member was discriminated against and was literally told Black people do not live around here."*

- *"My son, age 31, had the most difficult time getting a mortgage loan even though he was employed, a college graduate, and had NO debt. He is Black though!"*

- *"A family member had a few felonies. He paid his debt to society and returned rehabilitated. He has been able to get jobs, but not housing. His discrimination has stemmed from background checks, although his last felony, misdemeanor, or any other criminal or civil matters are over 10 years ago."*

- *"The elderly are being forced out of their homes."*

When asked *"How can Greater Cincinnati improve its efforts in promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity across all neighborhoods, the city, counties, and the region,"* the feedback highlights a strong desire for more affordable housing and more community engagement, including public hearings, listening sessions, and neighborhood dialogues. There is also a call for equal education between public schools and those in affluent neighborhoods, more job opportunities for the youth, and higher paying job availability in underserved communities.

Additionally, there is a demand for the creation of upward mobility into Fortune 500 companies along with better educational and job opportunities, increased diversity and

inclusion in decision-making, equitable economic policies, systemic changes for social justice, and improvements in neighborhood safety and infrastructure.

Overall, the responses reflect a community actively seeking significant improvements in inclusivity, fairness, and quality of life. There is a clear call for intentional and sustained strategies to hold the government, civic, nonprofit, community agencies, board of directors, and advocacy groups accountable for having more diverse membership. Lastly, enhancing quality of life by creating walkable, clean roads and improving police monitoring were identified as priorities.

Quotes Regarding Inclusion in Greater Cincinnati

- *"More housing units and programs for single moms with good incomes also who may have hit a hard time."*
- *"Better housing at a reasonable rate. Build recreational facilities and nice restaurants in Non-White neighborhoods."*
- *"Host neighborhood meetings that actually make decisions for the neighborhoods."*
- *"Make public hearings, important meetings and vital information accessible to people who work full-time so that they can actively participate."*
- *"More equitable public-school funding, so that students in the City of Cincinnati can receive the funding that students in more affluent areas receive."*
- *"More jobs for teens. More grocery stores in food desert neighborhoods. Equal education opportunities. Cultural training for police officers."*
- *"Be more inclusive and invite African Americans to the tables of decisions."*
- *"Inclusion, diversity, and equity are not shiny toys to play with when it seems trendy... DEI takes intentional and ongoing efforts."*
- *"We need to address issues of diversity, not abandon the issues."*
- *"Safety is an issue and therefore some neighborhoods do not have grocery stores etc. Neighborhoods in urban areas are not walkable."*
- *"More attention to roads and cleanliness of all neighborhoods; not just in the affluent neighborhoods."*

Comparisons across Different Demographic Groups

An additional analysis using data from the 2015 and 2024 Inclusion Surveys, specifically comparing responses across racial groups. We have identified notable trends within the data that warrant further investigation to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics and to explore opportunities for more comprehensive study.

Our analysis focused on comparing responses between Black and White survey respondents, given the constraints imposed by sample size limitations of other racial groups.

INCLUSIVITY IN CINCINNATI

In the 2015 survey, 59% of White respondents and 39% of Black respondents rated Greater Cincinnati as inclusive. By 2024, these figures rose to 70% for White respondents and 52% for Black respondents. Conversely, in 2015, 19% of White respondents and 35% of Black respondents viewed the city as not inclusive. In 2024, 8% of White respondents considered it not inclusive, compared to 22% of Black respondents.

70% White

52% Black
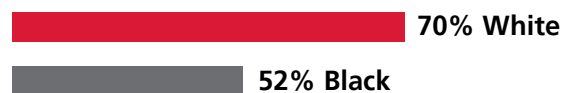
JOB OPPORTUNITIES

In 2015, 43% of White respondents rated the overall job opportunity system as good compared to 32% of Black respondents. By 2024, 60% of White respondents viewed Cincinnati's job market positively, contrasting with 49% of Black respondents. Despite the improvements, there remains a significant perception gap between the two racial groups.

60% White

49% Black
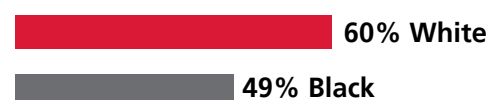
HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION

Perceptions of access to high-quality education have shown a significant increase among White respondents but a slight decrease among Black respondents from 2015 to 2024.

In 2015, 72% of White and 63% of Black respondents viewed access to high-quality education as good. In the 2024 survey, 82% of White and 62% of Black respondents rated it positively.

82% White

62% Black

ACCESS TO CAPITAL

There are notable differences between White and Black respondents regarding perceptions of access to capital from lending institutions.

In 2015, 57% of White and 26% of Black respondents rated access to capital as good. By 2024, these figures changed to 62% for White respondents and 27% for Black respondents who view access to capital favorably.

62% White

27% Black
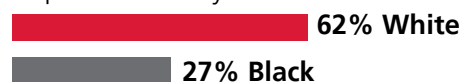
LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Concerning affordable housing options, both White (79%) and Black (71%) respondents expressed dissatisfaction in the 2024 survey (this question was not included in the 2015 Inclusion Survey).

This issue surfaced as the most significant inclusion issue based upon comments and poor ratings within the 2024 Inclusion report. There is a significant concern that marginalized people are being pushed out of their neighborhoods and there are not enough affordable housing options available in Greater Cincinnati.

79% White

71% Black

POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS

In 2015, 58% of White respondents and 37% of Black respondents rated police-community relations as good. By contrast, in 2024, these numbers dropped to 29% for White respondents and 30% for Black respondents. Additionally, in 2015, 11% of White respondents and 22% of Black respondents rated police-community relations as not good, which increased to 26% for White respondents and 25% for Black respondents in 2024.

The data highlights a decline in perceptions of Police-Community relations by both White and Black respondents. The 2024 results also identify a significant decline in the positive rating of Police-Community relations among White respondents.

This finding necessitates further investigation to determine if there are factors in the two time periods that may have had an impact on the negative shift in the results (i.e., In 2015, the Chief of Police in Cincinnati was African American and there was significant reporting on Cincinnati's landmark police community reforms).

29% White

30% White
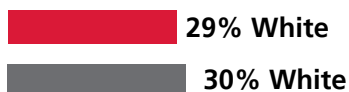
An Overview of the Listening Session with Community Stakeholders

While quantitative data from the Inclusion survey plays a crucial role in gaining some understanding of the perceptions Black Cincinnati has regarding inclusion in Greater Southwestern Ohio, our listening session offered a complementary approach for capturing qualitative insights, amplifying community voices, and fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

During our listening session, participants expressed deep concerns and proposed several opportunities regarding the future of the city. Major themes centered around the challenges of inclusion and representation, the potential role of the Urban League as a key player in facilitating change, and the urgent need for education and workforce development improvements.

Participants discussed the disheartening realities of housing and economic disparity, particularly in areas like Avondale, Evanston and other communities where high poverty contrasts sharply with pockets of developing wealth. The dialogue also highlighted the importance of engaging and empowering the youth, fostering better leadership and collaboration across various sectors, and creating actionable plans that ensure effective representation and utilization of the data we collect. These insights underscore a collective desire for strategic, inclusive, proactive, and consistent efforts to ensure that we are a measurably inclusive city.

Homeownership is the essential means to minimizing poverty

"Cincinnati has Communities that have a significant number of rental properties that are beyond the financial reach of many. Homeownership not only offers the chance to build generational wealth but also grants individuals a voice at the decision-making table. Unfortunately, renters often find themselves excluded from these discussions." The decline in homeownership among Black communities is a complex issue with profound economic and social consequences. Avondale, with a 50% poverty rate and 77% renter population, starkly illustrates this disparity. Meanwhile, the area sees substantial commercial development supported by

some of the city's most affluent corporations. Several factors contribute to the challenges faced in achieving homeownership, including:

- **Wealth Disparities** - The racial wealth gap persists, with Black households typically having lower incomes and less wealth than White households. This makes it more challenging for Black individuals and families to save for a down payment and qualify for mortgages with favorable terms.
- **Affordability** - Housing prices have been rising, making homeownership increasingly unattainable for many within the Black community.
- **Systemic Barriers** - Structural inequalities in housing policies and practices continue to hinder Black homeownership. These include inadequate access to affordable housing programs and an increase in property tax assessments.

Systemic Barriers to Information Access, Exclusionary Networks, and Representation.

- **Information Access Disparities** - Many marginalized groups have faced challenges in accessing the same information and resources as other racial or ethnic groups. Items discussed included restricted opportunities due to what high school you attended and/or what neighborhood you live in, silos, and a lack of equal representation in decision-making processes.
- **Exclusionary Networks** - Some networks are not accessible to racial and ethnic minorities, yet these networks often play a crucial role in shaping policies, business opportunities, and community development initiatives. When racial

and ethnic minorities are excluded, they miss valuable opportunities for advancement and representation. There is a need for better collaboration within and across diverse communities. A concern was voiced that Cincinnati often operates from a mentality of "One Black at a time" concerning significant leadership roles. This reality has led to a quiet bias or self-sabotage that ensues between and other marginalized groups. There is significant growth needed for Black people within mainstream circles of power and an evolving set of Black-Established circles of power.

- **Lack of Representation** - Even when racial and ethnic minorities are present at the "table," they may not always represent the broader interests and perspectives of the Black community. It was specifically mentioned that the sale of the railroad did not address the 5 – 10 most significant issues in the city; we must have representatives that represent the needs of the community at large.

Inclusion Survey Recommendations

Based on the Inclusion Survey Results, Analysis and Comparisons, 7 recommendations have identified. By prioritizing these recommendations and implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable community where all residents have the opportunity to thrive.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Enhance Affordable Housing Options

Implement rent control measures, expanding affordable housing programs, and advocating for policies that promote inclusive urban development.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Increase Access to Capital & Job Opportunities

Lending institutions have to be accountable to the communities they serve and there is an increased need for new auditing processes to measure fairness and equity within financial institutions.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Strengthen Collaborative Efforts

Collaboration between government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community stakeholders is essential for driving meaningful change. Building partnerships and fostering dialogue can help identify common goals and develop effective strategies for advancing inclusion.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Improve Race Relations & Police-Community relationsship

Implement community policing initiatives, cultural collaboration efforts between the community across different socio-economic levels and law enforcement, and fostering dialogue between police & marginalized communities.

RECOMMENDATION #5

Empower Marginalized Communities

Supporting marginalized communities, particularly in areas like Avondale, is crucial for promoting social and economic empowerment (i.e., initiatives to increase homeownership, access to educational and workforce development programs, and address wealth disparities).

RECOMMENDATION #6

Address Systemic Barriers to Inclusion

Efforts should be made to dismantle systemic barriers that hinder inclusion, such as disparities in information access, exclusionary networks, and a lack of representation. This will require reforms in education, employment, and governance to ensure equal opportunities for all residents.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Inclusion Innovation: Convene, Facilitate, Support & Empower Inclusion Solutions

There must be a shift from rebuilding recycled former strategies to replacement, creating new methods and strategies. Priority should be given to developing innovative approaches that align with the community's current needs, attitudes, and circumstances.

Limitations

The general reliability of our study's findings may be constrained by the sample size and the focus on specific geographical regions. To enhance data quality and participation rates, future surveys could be shortened to enhance data quality and participation rates and include more targeted questions. Additionally, we recognize that Cincinnati residents may be experiencing survey fatigue or fatigued on the topic of diversity and inclusion. There was a notable preference for listening sessions over surveys and expanding collaboration with other community organizations to boost participation.

ERIC M. ELLIS, MA
President & CEO
Integrity Devlopment Corp.

POLICY AGENDA

The Black community has historically been excluded from policy which has led to a lack of engagement. It's why for organizations like the Urban League it is important to work with local, state, and federal, governments to create policies that are inclusive and beneficial for Black, marginalized, and underserved communities. Our policy agenda for the State of Black Cincinnati reflects key areas where the goal is to achieve parity for Black communities in Cincinnati. We welcome partnership and collaboration with elected officials and stakeholders in achieving these policy goals and priorities.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We believe that all families should have access to safe, affordable housing that does not create a financial burden. All neighborhoods should have access to amenities for families like grocery stores, pharmacies, retail, and thriving business districts. These are the policy initiatives needed to see this realized:

- Changes to the zoning code are effective in increasing housing volume these changes must be city wide and include all neighborhoods; in addition we advocate for policies that combat gentrification/displacement and directly affect price and affordability.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

We work to ensure that employees receive thriving wages with benefits. We believe that when workers are paid fairly they are able to invest in their families and bring vitality to their communities. According to the Poor People's Campaign, public assistance programs spend $153 billion annually due to low wages. Financial stability allows families to engage more fully with their communities on all levels.

- Expanded Child Tax Credit
- Universal Basic Income
- Government investments in providing childcare for all families

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

We work to ensure that every eligible voter is able to vote. We decry any attempts to suppress eligible voters from exercising their right to vote. We advocate for federal and state protections for voters to be passed and made the law of the land. We advocate for the fair and equitable drawing of congressional maps so that the process is inclusive, fair and transparent.

- John Lewis Voting Rights Act
- Freedom to Vote Act
- Gerrymandering/fair maps in OH
- Local governments to join in engaging local voter engagements

AFTERWORD

As we conclude this report, I am compelled to reflect on the journey we've embarked on together. Throughout the pages preceding this afterword, we've delved into the story of what the data reveals for Black Cincinnatians in areas of economic and employment, COVID outcomes, health, education, housing, criminal justice, civic engagement, and inclusion. As we take a moment to contemplate the significance of these outcomes, it is evident that our city still has some work to do for Black Cincinnatians.

When it was time to update the State of Black Cincinnati Report, changing the structure of the report to allow the data to tell the story was important. This change in focus was important for me because without data we cannot change what we do not know. We also understand that data is not just a collection of numbers and statistics; it's essential for informed decision-making, a compass guiding us through the complexities of our world. Data holds a profound significance in fostering transparency and accountability. Knowing that this report has the potential to change the outcomes for Black

Cincinnatians regarding policies and initiatives, we let the data guide us.

WITHOUT DATA WE CANNOT CHANGE WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW

When it was time to gather the data that we had identified as important for the report, I knew that some of this data would be difficult to obtain in a post-pandemic world. The pandemic compelled everyone to slow down, which resulted in delays from the organizations responsible for collecting this data. However, what I wasn't anticipating was the amount of incomplete data we would encounter. I wanted to provide insights into what we have learned and recommendations for making data more accessible to everyone.

One of the challenges we faced was the lack of access to disaggregated data. Disaggregated data refers to information that is divided into detailed subcategories such as race, gender, age, and education level, among others. Disaggregated data provides insights into the unique experiences and challenges faced by diverse population groups.

By collecting data across multiple demographic variables such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic status, and geographic location, organizations can uncover disparities that may otherwise remain hidden. Without disaggregated data, our ability to get the full picture is limited. To ensure that this

data is being collected, organizations and the city should collaborate and co-design data collection efforts. This takes the burden off one organization and shares resources to ensure that disaggregated data is being collected and accessible to those who want access.

In an era of rapid technological advancements and unprecedented interconnectedness, data serves as the currency of progress, empowering individuals, organizations, and societies to innovate, adapt, and thrive. Having accessible and open data promotes transparency and drives innovation. During this endeavor, it was a bit difficult to collect crucial data because the data was inaccessible.

Several sources provided access to this data – CincyInsights, PolicyMap, City Health Dashboard, and the US Census Bureau, to name a few. However, if you're looking for additional data, you have to begin a search that will inevitably lead you down many rabbit holes to find the data that you need. Some of these include a paywall that is costly for organizations that don't have the resources.

As we move forward, it's essential to acknowledge the challenges we faced in gathering and interpreting the data. Incomplete datasets and delays highlighted systemic issues that hinder our ability to fully understand and address the disparities faced by Black Cincinnatians. However, these challenges only reinforce the importance of our mission—to advocate for data transparency, equity, and accessibility.

In the spirit of continuous improvement, I invite stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders to join us in our commitment to harnessing the power of data for positive change. Together, we can

ensure that future iterations of the State of Black Cincinnati Report are even more comprehensive, insightful, and impactful.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us, and may the insights gleaned from this report serve as a catalyst for meaningful action and lasting change.

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ABOUT THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER SOUTHWESTERN OHIO

Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio is committed to driving equity and financial empowerment for African Americans through advocacy, education and development. The League's Mission is to help Black people and historically underserved communities achieve their highest true social parity, economic self-reliance, power, civil rights and justice.

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