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Civil Rights Corps is a non-profit organization dedicated to challenging systemic injustice in the American legal system while using strategic policy to advance a holistic, root cause-focused approach to community safety.

We work with individuals who are accused and convicted of crimes, their families and communities, people currently or formerly incarcerated, activists, organizers, judges, movement organizations, and government officials to challenge criminal-legal injustice, further racial equity, and build an affirmative vision for how we keep families and communities safe.

Safety That Works: Evidence-Based Investments for Keeping Youth & Communities Safe

A Brief for Lawmakers & Advocates

GOAL

Policymakers at the national, state, and local levels are interested in strategies that will prevent carjacking and other violent incidents before they happen, thereby keeping all of our communities safer. To meet this need, this policy brief (1) notes some key insights on carjackings and community safety generally, based on the available data and evidence elsewhere; (2) surveys some models achieving success throughout the country; and (3) makes policy recommendations based on these insights and examples. At a high level, the memo also seeks to make a simple point: increased criminalization is not the way to serve youth or to keep families safe. Increased criminalization and incarceration will only make people *less* safe while decimating the opportunities of future generations, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Executive Summary

All people want to feel safe—and actually be safe—in their communities. We want our children to thrive, leading safe and healthy lives, free of violence. Far too often, however, this desire has been warped to promote solutions that will not make people safer, but will instead scapegoat and further marginalize our most vulnerable community members.

Whether communities are dealing with [fears of carjackings](#) or other forms of violence, increased criminalization and incarceration are not the answers. In fact, overwhelming evidence shows that heavy reliance on jailing people, [especially young people](#), substantially [increases their risk](#) of future incarceration. Polling [has found](#) that the overwhelming majority of Americans would like to see a youth justice system that favors rehabilitation over punishment while nearly two-thirds support closing youth prisons.

Luckily, we do have solutions that work to keep all communities, especially youth, safe from violence and harm. Interventions like [greening vacant lots](#), expanding [cash-assistance](#) and [employment programs](#), and funding youth [afterschool programs](#) have the power to make us all safer—both by reducing harm and violence and by promoting overall health and wellbeing. Consequently, these approaches should be the backbone of any safety agenda that policymakers pursue. Following decades of community disinvestment, as well as two years of pandemic isolation and collective grief, our youth deserve robust investments into the things

that will truly keep them—and their communities—safe and thriving.

The following pages explore these themes in depth including important research underlying this public-health centered approach to community safety, as well as why these

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programs are particularly necessary in this current moment followed by an overview of several successful programs that have directly addressed issues of auto theft where youth are involved, as well as larger issues of violence and harm. Finally, we propose three policy pillars that should undergird efforts both to address auto theft and promote holistic, community-led safety at the local, state, and national levels:

- 1. Funding for targeted, non-carceral, evidence-based interventions that holistically prevent violence and support youth**, including diversion, mentorship, violence interruption, and employment programs aimed at reducing gun violence and carjacking specifically.
- 2. Resources for participatory, community-led “Safety Needs Assessments” and**

non-carceral “Safety Action Plans” at the local level.

- 3. Robust funding for a package that would holistically support youth**, including significant investments in safe and supportive schools (i.e., school-based supports, tutoring, wraparound services, counselors), safe foundations (i.e., childcare and early education, universal school meals, expansion of the child tax credit), safe streets (i.e., programs that divert youth from the criminal-legal system), safe futures (i.e., summer jobs programs, vocational training, college access), and safe communities (i.e., participatory budgeting, housing programs).

This country has the ability to incentivize, fund, and otherwise help seed solutions to violence and harm that will make us truly safer, not exacerbate the root issues in our communities. We urge policymakers to view this moment as an opportunity to make the necessary, life-sustaining investments that will help all of us—particularly our next generation—truly thrive.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF SAFETY

Across the country, criminal-legal actors have tried increasing arrests and incarceration for youth offenses, namely carjackings. That approach has failed to prevent this problem—and may ultimately make matters worse. And where armed robberies are concerned, the story is the same: criminal-legal punishment has not served to reduce these crimes significantly.

Ultimately, keeping our communities safe will require understanding why these harms are happening and identifying ways to intervene upstream, as well as to provide alternative accountability that helps rather than exacerbates the underlying problems. This section summarizes some evidence on the “social determinants of safety” that should undergird any basket of policy responses.

The Counterproductive Effects of Criminal-Legal Interventions

Research suggests that policies aimed at criminalizing and incarcerating youth will not reduce violence and crime; in fact, they are very likely to exacerbate the underlying problems.

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Studies have found that incarceration can serve to *increase* crime at the [state](#) and [local](#) levels. Jailing people, even for short periods, can make them [more likely](#) to commit crimes following their release—mostly by destabilizing their lives. And most pertinent to this conversation, research has found that criminalization and incarceration are particularly ineffective when dealing with [issues of violent crime](#). Leading criminologists have

found that past efforts to [increase federal sanctions for gun crimes](#) have been largely ineffective. Moreover, this finding is remarkably consistent: a [meta-analysis of 116 empirical studies](#) concluded that prison either increased reoffending or did not affect it, compared to prison alternatives. For more research regarding the ineffective and counterproductive effects of incarceration, see The Brennan Center's: [How Many Americans Are Unnecessarily Incarcerated?](#)

The research is even stronger when it comes to juvenile incarceration. Incarcerating youth takes them away from their schools, their neighborhoods, and their social bonds at a time when they are critically needed for development. It is unsurprising, then, that incarceration is ineffective at deterring future crimes and breaking cycles of violence. In a study of multiple Wisconsin counties, researchers found that [70 percent of youth](#) who had been imprisoned were rearrested within one year of release. Furthermore, when looking at youth enrolled in a diversion program, having been previously incarcerated is an extremely strong predictor of recidivism—almost [5 times more predictive](#) than other studied risk factors such as being in a gang, carrying a weapon, or having a poor parental relationship. There is reason to believe that this link is causal: recent research, using random assignments of punitive judges as a variable, showed that the choice to incarcerate juveniles [substantially increases](#) their risk of later adult incarceration.

Bringing this research to a local level, looking at the city that originally prompted this memo—Washington, DC—is instructive. DC has some of the toughest carjacking laws in the country, with a 15-year mandatory minimum penalty in Federal prison in most cases, but carjacking is certainly no lower than elsewhere. In fact, evidence suggests that youth incarceration [may only make recidivism worse](#). Last year, the Metropolitan Police Department created a coordinated task force to address youth carjackings; the result was more arrests, but not a decline in carjackings.

Social Capital & Third Spaces

During the pandemic, many of our social institutions were frayed. Rec centers shuttered. Afterschool programs [closed down or went online](#), making them inaccessible to many students. People stopped participating fully in public life. Besides having impacts on mental health and economic well-being, these changes strained a core component of safety: social capital and the presence of “third spaces” that keep communities resilient and cohesive.

Research has consistently shown the importance of social capital and community institutions in preventing harm. According to one national study, every additional ten [non-profit community organizations](#) tackling violence and building stronger communities results in a 9 percent drop in the homicide rate. [Research](#) on the value of these “[third spaces](#)” like community centers, parks, and libraries shows that they contribute to residents’ overall sense of safety and security.

Moving forward, rebuilding these spaces will be key for strengthening community safety. The ongoing pandemic certainly holds complications for this project, but the decimation of these institutions has doubtlessly played some role—perhaps even a significant role—in undermining safety goals.

Economic Instability

In communities nationwide, economic instability poses a great threat to individual and community safety. While many have been [ringing the alarm on economic instability](#) for years, the onset of the pandemic [left many](#) without access to jobs, food, and other necessities. As we enter the third year of the pandemic, many of the supports that kept people afloat [have expired](#). This lack of financial stability has translated into housing as well: while rents generally went down during 2020, they [rebounded sharply](#) in 2021, and inflation has made all sorts of necessities [harder to afford](#) for many families. And [rates of inequality](#) remain at record levels.

This particular combination of inequality and instability profoundly impacts safety, and addressing it will be key to reducing violence and harm. Evidence indicates that lowering local inequality could help reduce both violent and property crime. And on a national level, economic inequality [predicts homicide rates](#) “better than any other variable.” Emergency financial assistance for those experiencing economic insecurity, one study showed, reduced total arrests, including a [51 percent reduction in arrests](#) for violent crimes. Short-term financial assistance, especially when

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[combined with cognitive behavioral therapy](#), has been shown to decrease violence and crime. Many studies have demonstrated that [cash transfers reduce domestic violence events in particular](#). Increasing [youth employment](#), such as through summer jobs programs, has been found to reduce violent crime as much [as 43 percent—with long-lasting, positive effects](#). At the local level, increasing [access to affordable housing](#) by building more low-income housing units yields significant reductions in violent crime. And there is reason to believe these effects may be pronounced for youth, with research finding that [reducing socio-economic segregation](#) of neighborhoods, such as through housing vouchers, reduces youth arrests for violent crime.

In short, stabilizing housing and financial security is not only a matter of individual well-being, but also a direct way of improving community-level safety outcomes.

Built Design

Investments in maintaining the built design—including streetlights, sidewalks, road design, and green space—can make communities safer and more equitable. Our country has fallen behind other nations on protecting its infrastructure, [earning a C-rating](#) from America's Infrastructure Report Card. The pandemic's supply chain and work disruptions have [also led to](#) substantial impacts on the nation's infrastructure. At the same time, the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act provides a [host of grants](#) that could help jurisdictions invest in their built environment.

Such investments can have a very positive impact on protecting residents, if properly designed. Not only can investing in built design directly improve health, but also it provides an opportunity to address safety and violence issues. Recent studies in multiple jurisdictions, including [Philadelphia](#), [Baltimore](#), and [Youngstown](#), have found that maintaining green space reduces certain types of crime. And in Seattle, a program that provides matching funds to community organizations so that they can complete neighborhood improvement projects was found to [substantially decrease violent crime](#), especially in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

Youth Programs

Programs for youth, both inside and outside of schools, have been largely upended by the pandemic. Researchers [have noted](#) the devastating impact of this loss, given how vital

such programs are for positive youth development. For many of our most vulnerable students, access to quality youth programs has

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[always been limited](#). Investing in youth programs comes with myriad positive effects, both in improving youth emotional and physical health, as well as reducing rates of violence and crime.

Research has found that youth programs aimed at promoting overall well-being, including health, education, and financial resources, are vital for ensuring long-term safety and stability. High-quality afterschool programs have broadly positive impacts for children. By providing a safe space that promotes students' health and development, these programs can [reduce drug use and decrease arrests](#) and other forms of criminal-legal involvement among children.

Youth-focused sports and therapy programming can reduce the [likelihood of future arrests](#) for a violent crime by 50 percent. Programs to support students' [social and emotional well-being](#) have been found to reduce total arrests by as much as 35 percent, violent crime arrests by as much as 50 percent, and, for program youth in juvenile detention facilities, recidivism by 21 percent.

Violence Intervention

Amidst the pain, devastation, and stress caused by the pandemic, violence has risen in many US jurisdictions. Gender-based violence has [noticeably increased](#) over the last two years, and several cities have contended with higher rates of certain crime. A [wave of gun buying](#) during the pandemic has also put more children in proximity to firearms. While [it is incorrect](#) to say that we are experiencing a “crime wave,” any increase in violence is deeply concerning. While all of the investments described above will be critical for addressing the root causes of violence and harm, there are also many effective strategies for dealing more directly with violence, *without* a counter-productive reliance on the criminal-legal system.

Violence intervention programs, particularly those aimed at youth, can be a highly effective way of mitigating violence without doubling down on the many harms that are caused by the criminal-legal system. A [meta-analysis](#) found that trauma-based youth violence prevention programs are able to substantially reduce both recidivism and re-injury. Robust research has shown that [violence prevention programs in schools](#) significantly reduce violent behavior among students at all grade levels and in all school environments. A study of Baltimore’s non-carceral violence interruption program “Safe Streets” found that its outreach workers [reduced serious violence by 69 percent](#). Like other youth programs, many of these programs also have the added benefit of improving academic

performance and reducing problematic substance use among youth.

SURVEY OF SUCCESSFUL MODELS

The previous section discussed the high-level social determinants of safety that are particularly relevant here. This section describes specific interventions that have been implemented successfully throughout the country and abroad:

Youth Interventions Focused on Auto Theft

[San Francisco’s Make-it-Right Program](#): The Make-it-Right (MIR) program is a restorative justice program that takes youth facing felony charges for things like burglary, assault, or auto theft and has these individuals “meet with the people they have harmed or a surrogate, accept responsibility for the impact of their actions, and come to an agreement for how the youth can repair to the greatest extent possible the harm they caused.” In exchange for completing the action plan, charges will not be filed against the youth. A randomized controlled trial found that compared to youth who were not assigned MIR, assignment to the MIR program [reduced rearrests](#) by 44% over 6 months, 33% over one year, and 30% over 4 years.

[Connecticut’s Diversion Program](#): In 2019, the Connecticut Legislature passed PA 19-110, which created a program designed to deal

specifically with motor vehicle theft by young people. The Act allows the court to suspend delinquency proceedings for up to 6 months to allow the child to participate in services aimed at addressing their needs and the risk factors that often contribute to the child committing the offense in the first place. If the child satisfactorily completes the services and complies with probation/court orders, the charge(s) can be dismissed. As of mid-December, 2020, approximately 60 kids had participated in the program; of those completing the program, more than 75% have had no subsequent arrest.

The Auto Theft Accountability Program: Scott County, Iowa's Auto Theft Accountability Program is designed to target individuals who are being charged with their first offense and to provide these individuals with non-carceral methods of taking accountability for the harm that they have caused their victim and the community. The program involves a restorative justice program in which charges are dropped after completion. In the first year of the program's enactment, there was more than a [50% decline](#) in the number of cars stolen by juveniles.

Young Recidivist Car Theft Offender Program (U-Turn): Operating in Tasmania, U-Turn is a diversion program that enrolls young people who have been arrested for auto theft in a 10-week intensive on car mechanics, maintenance and body work. It also provides wrap-around support, connecting them with further education or employment. A [study of the program](#) found that it increased job skills and overall well-being, as well as reduced recidivism

Violence & Harm Reduction Programs Focused on Youth

Detroit Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (DYVPI): DYVPI is an initiative to keep Detroit youth safe from gun violence, as well as to promote their overall health and education. The plan was developed by a group of residents, advocates, and community leaders—including youth and parents—through a [community-based planning process](#). The initiative weaves together five separate programs that work together to address the underlying causes of youth violence. The current programs are Ceasefire (a program that takes a public health approach to gun violence), Safe Routes to School (a program to institute supervision of routes where students walk to school), Success Centers (school-based centers that support the utilization of alternatives to suspension), Summer Strategy (provides mentoring, summer jobs, and career development, and CITI Camp (a mentoring program for middle school students). Several of these programs, including [Ceasefire](#) and [Safe Routes to Schools](#), have been studied for their effectiveness at curbing youth violence and harm.

Youth Inclusion Program: Operating in 13 municipalities across Canada, YIP is a neighborhood-based program to combat violence and crime, specifically for children and adolescents aged 11-20. The program is centered on conflict resolution, leadership and youth development, skills training, social-emotional learning, substance prevention / treatment, and truancy prevention, and individualized plans and wraparound resources

are a core component of the structure.

Evaluations of the program have found that $\frac{2}{3}$ of participants had lower risk levels for engaging in crime after completing the program.

Roca: The Roca program, which began in Boston but has since spread to Baltimore, works with young people aged 16-24 who are involved, or at risk of involvement, with violence and the criminal-legal system. The program provides education, employment, and life skills training, alongside mentorship and counseling. It prioritizes meeting youth where they are and continuing to work with them throughout their journey. Their most recent evaluation showed that Roca participation [lowered the risk of violent recidivism](#) by 66%.

Healing Centered Schools: Healing Centered Schools are an approach to education that centers the basic mental, physical, and safety needs of students as part of their cognitive development and growth. The strategy uses “holistic methods involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing.” This [six-part series](#) on creating healing centered schools shows practitioners the ways these approaches can help guide the transition back to in-person schooling in ways that improve well-being and increase safety for students and their community.

Restorative Justice in Education: School districts across the country are implementing Restorative Justice in Education programs, focused on reducing suspensions and eliminating the school to prison pipeline. The

programs have been shown to reduce racial disparities and exclusionary punishments, which are [strongly tied](#) to future risk of arrest.

Other Approaches to Preventing Violence & Harm

Operation Peacemaker: The Operation Peacemaker Fellowship was launched in Richmond, California to address rising gun violence by finding the young men in the community who are most at risk for committing gun violence, and enrolling them in a voluntary, 18-month program which gives them the resources and guidance to map out and begin achieving their life goals. As in many fellowships, direct financial assistance was provided to participants. The program proved to be [highly successful](#) in the five years post-intervention, with homicides in Richmond decreasing by an average of 55 percent, and the city saved an estimated \$500 million on net.

Trauma Prevention Initiative (TPI): Los Angeles’ TPI program seeks to reduce community violence through a public health strategy that prioritizes peer intervention and prevention, with community-led decision making at its core. TPI provides capacity-building and support to organizations led by those in the community and those affected by violence. TPI programs, including hospital-based interventions and funding for accessible forms of mental healthcare, have been successful in their first few years of implementation. And [research suggests](#) that they have lowered the homicide rates in the neighborhood in which they operate.

Parramore Kidz Zone: The mission of Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) is to level the playing field for Parramore’s children, equipping them to become successful, healthy, well-educated adults in Orlando’s highest poverty neighborhood, and ultimately replicate this model in other Orlando neighborhoods. PKZ is achieving this by investing in things that make a difference in children’s lives—such as quality early childhood education, after school programs, programs that build family economic success, youth development programs for teenagers, access to health care, mentoring, tutoring, college access assistance, and more. A [study](#) of the PKZ found it produced a 61 percent decline in juvenile arrests, a 56 percent decline in teen pregnancies, and a 38 percent decline in child abuse cases in the neighborhood.

Phoenix Union High School District: In the summer of 2020, the Phoenix Union High School District [ended its contract](#) with the Phoenix Police Department for school resource officers (“SROs”) for the next three years and reallocated the \$1.2 million to participatory processes that would solicit ideas for alternative school safety investments. For the initial investment, school staff are responsible for reallocating \$500,000, students are responsible for reallocating \$500,000, and parents are responsible for reallocating \$200,000. Each stakeholder group will develop, propose, and then vote to select among investment options.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for Federal Lawmakers

We recommend considering the following interventions at the federal level.

1

Increase Funding Available for Targeted, Non-Carceral, Evidence-Based Interventions That Holistically Prevent Violence.

First, we know that many communities are facing an immediate issue with carjackings, as well as concerns about violence—and while jurisdictions can and should take broader actions, federal policymakers can begin by facilitating targeted local-level investments that address these issues head-on. To this end, we recommend creating grant programs that unlock resources for non-carceral programs that address carjackings without increasing criminal punishment, such as programs patterned on [The Auto Theft Accountability Program](#), the [Young Recidivist Car Theft Offender Program \(U-Turn\)](#), and other successful models. Such programs could be financed by fully funding the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act](#) (JJDPA) Titles II & V grants. We further recommend expanding federal resources for community violence intervention, including a prioritization of projects that are led by directly impacted community members.

Turning to implementation, we would urge a change in how these and similar grant programs are structured: rather than funding these grants through the Department of Justice and other agencies associated with the criminal-legal system, we advise funding these programs through non-carceral agencies—the Department of Health and Human Services at the federal level and, at the community level, local departments of health. This switch would emphasize a much-needed paradigm shift *away* from seeing safety as entirely a criminal-legal matter and *toward* a public health-centered model that emphasizes root causes and prevention. At the federal level, policymakers could accomplish this shift by creating a Division of Community Safety in the Department of Health and Human Services that would administer these programs, as is described in [The People’s Response Act](#) and recommended in the [Congressional Progressive Caucus’ executive action priorities](#).

2

Increase Federal Funding for Community Safety Needs Assessments.

Second, we recommend that federal lawmakers help jurisdictions gain a deeper sense of their underlying community safety-related needs using participatory processes—processes that serve to understand local issues, educate residents, and engage community members in designing appropriate solutions. To this end, we recommend unlocking grant dollars that can fund policymakers to engage local institutions (i.e., a local university or relevant nonprofit) to conduct a participatory “safety needs

assessment” that assesses not only what is driving local behaviors that are concerning

We recommend unlocking grant dollars that can fund policymakers to engage local institutions (i.e., a local university or relevant nonprofit) to conduct a participatory “safety needs assessment” that assesses not only what is driving local behaviors that are concerning residents, but also what all residents need to feel safe.

residents, but also what all residents need to feel safe. This needs assessment should culminate in a targeted “safety action plan”—presented and shaped at community fora—that will most effectively address these root causes. It may also culminate in a “participatory budgeting” process that allows community members to directly channel where these safety dollars go. For more information, please see [this guide](#) for local lawmakers.

Having funded these assessments and action plans, Congress should provide additional funding for implementing these identified non-carceral programs and interventions. To this end, lawmakers should pass and fully fund [The People’s Response Act](#), which would use its new Division of Community Safety to provide sustained, flexible funding for holistic, non-carceral, community-led approaches to safety.

We recommend pursuing a comprehensive, interdisciplinary strategy that makes dramatic and targeted investments in youth nationwide—investments that would not only address the various issues discussed here, but also address the devastating learning and social disruptions that have impacted youth worldwide over these last few years.

3

Pass and Fund a Holistic Framework for Supporting Youth.

Moving even bolder, we recommend pursuing a comprehensive, interdisciplinary strategy that makes dramatic and targeted investments in youth nationwide—investments that would not only address the various issues discussed here, but also address the devastating learning and social disruptions that have impacted youth

worldwide over these last few years. The cornerstones of this approach could include:

Safe & Supportive Schools: “Safe & Supportive Schools” would substantially increase resources for in-school programs that increase the use of restorative justice, social-emotional learning, counselors, and the broad basket of wraparound services. These investments could include, along with others:

- ✓ Passing and fully funding the [Counselors not Criminalization Act](#);
- ✓ Investing \$5 billion into community violence intervention, as proposed in Build Back Better; and
- ✓ Via the appropriations process, dramatically increasing the funding available through:
 - [Preventing Violence Affecting Young Lives Grant](#);
 - [Project Prevent Grants](#);
 - [Promise Neighborhoods](#);
 - [Full-Service Community Schools](#);
 - and
 - [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#).

Safe Foundations: “Safe Foundations” would ensure that youth have all of the building blocks that they need to thrive. These investments could include, along with others:

- ✓ Passing and fully funding the [Universal School Meals Act](#);
- ✓ Making paid parental and family leave available to all workers; Allowing all individuals below 26 to enroll into the Medicare system and receive a

comprehensive set of health benefits—with no cost-sharing;

- ✓ Passing and fully funding the early childhood policies outlined in Build Back Better, including with modifications that would make these programs maximally effective for our most vulnerable youth:
 - Providing universal preschool for all 3- and 4-year olds;
 - Making childcare *free*; and
 - Making permanent the expansion of the fully refundable Child Tax Credit, but structuring this credit so that it is administered through the Social Security Administration.

Safe Streets: “Safe Streets” would dramatically invest in mentoring programs, fellowship programs, and other youth programs that help prevent involvement with the criminal-legal system. These investments could include, along with others:

- ✓ Mentoring and fellowship programs, such as those run by Roca and Operation Peacemaker;
- ✓ Investments in free, voluntary, holistic, community-led diversion programs modeled on [The Auto Theft Accountability Program](#) and the [Young Recidivist Car Theft Offender Program \(U-Turn\)](#), which specifically provide alternative accountability for youth carjackings;
- ✓ Wraparound service provision based in specific neighborhoods, such as the [Parramore Kidz Zone](#);
- ✓ [Funding Safe Routes to Schools](#) programs; and

- ✓ As noted above, full funding of the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act](#) (JJDP) Titles II & V grants.

Safe Futures: “Safe Futures” would dramatically increase resources for mentoring, summer jobs, college, and job / career training programs for youth. These investments could include, along with others:

- ✓ Providing grants for summer youth employment programs, including planning grants for jurisdictions that do not currently have programs;
- ✓ Fully funding community college attendance and passing the [PROSPECT Act](#), which would give parents access to the childcare that they need to get their degrees;
- ✓ Canceling at least \$50,000 in student loan debt, in accordance with [the Civil Rights Principles for Student Loan Debt Cancellation](#); and
- ✓ Dramatically increasing Pell Grants for low-income and incarcerated students.

Safe Communities: “Safe Communities” will provide federal dollars for recreation centers, sports leagues, enrichment programs, park restoration, streetlights, and other community institutions identified as being highest priority from a safety perspective. These investments could include, along with others:

- ✓ Expansion of affordable housing, through increased funding for of [vouchers](#), and the creation of new and renovated quality public housing in socio-economically diverse neighborhoods;

- ✓ Funding for participatory budgeting projects that would provide residents of a given neighborhood the opportunity to decide what projects—be it school renovations, new parks, improvements to street design, or any other local initiative—would best keep them safe; and
- ✓ Increased and flexible funding for community-led organizations that are able to adapt and respond to the specific needs of the community as they arise.

Recommendations for Local Lawmakers

For local policymakers, we recommend considering a similar basket of interventions.

1 Immediately Invest in Evidence-Based Interventions to Address Auto Theft & Violence Prevention.

Given immediate concerns about carjackings, as well as broader concerns about violence, we recommend investing in targeted programs that are patterned on [The Auto Theft Accountability Program](#) and the [Young Recidivist Car Theft Offender Program \(U-Turn\)](#). We would recommend connecting directly with these programs when designing and/or contracting out this work. And when designing these programs and funding mechanisms, we recommend going through non-carceral agencies (i.e., local departments of health) rather than through police, prosecutor offices, or other agencies associated with the criminal-legal system.

Having this non-carceral orientation will help to build trust, ensure community buy-in, and keep the interventions truly independent of carceral institutions.

2 Galvanize the Community to Understand Safety Needs.

Second, we recommend gaining a deeper sense of underlying safety-related needs using a participatory process. Such processes can include neighborhood-level, safety-focused participatory budgeting, such as the model described in this [American Rescue Plan Act guide](#), or the comprehensive Community Safety Needs Assessment framework highlighted in the [Community Safety Local Policymakers Guide](#). At a high-level, this model includes engaging one or more local institutions to conduct neighborhood-level Safety Needs Assessments that try to understand deeply not only what is driving local behaviors that are concerning residents, but also what all residents need to feel safe. These participatory assessments should culminate in a Safety Action Plan that maps out thoughtful, targeted investments to address these root needs.

3 Pass and Fund a Holistic Framework for Supporting Youth.

Finally, we recommend pursuing a comprehensive strategy—modeled, in large part, on the Detroit Youth Violence Prevention Initiative—which supports local youth in a

holistic fashion, truly working to address the challenges that they faced during this global pandemic. Leveraging federal dollars (i.e., the American Rescue Plan Act), state, and local dollars, we recommend a proposal that includes the following four planks:

- ✓ **Safe and Supportive Schools:** “Safe and Supportive Schools” would substantially increase resources for in-school programs that increase the use of restorative justice, social-emotional learning, wraparound services, and safe routes to school, as opposed to having school police serve this safety function—a dynamic that has been shown to make schools less safe for Black, brown, disabled, and otherwise marginalized students..
- ✓ **Safe Streets:** “Safe Streets” would invest in mentoring and fellowship programs, such as those run by Roca and Operation Peacemaker. The plank would also include investments in free, voluntary, holistic, community-led diversion programs and violence intervention programs, such as the well-studied Cure Violence model and Credible Messengers program.
- ✓ **Safe Summers:** “Safe Summers” would invest additional resources in mentoring, summer jobs, and job / career training programs for youth.
- ✓ **Safe Surroundings:** “Safe Surroundings” will use neighborhood-level participatory budgeting to invest in recreation centers, park restoration, streetlights, and other

community institutions identified as being highest priority from a safety perspective.

RESOURCES

Civil Rights Corps Resources

- CRC guides to using [American Rescue Plan Act](#) and [Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act](#) funding to promote non-carceral safety
- [CRC guide for local governments](#) on implementing a community safety policy that is shaped by community members and incorporates periodic needs assessments
- [CRC explainer on the evidence](#) tying built design, housing, economic security, and many more non-carceral interventions to community safety, showing research on how investments in these fields reduce violence and crime

External Resources

- [Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance : Fact Sheet: Understanding Juvenile Car Thefts](#)
- [Op-ed: Juvenile car theft is a problem. Compassion and knowledge is the solution.](#)