

**Guaranteed Income Pilot Recommendation Presentation**  
**Prepared for the Community Corrections Partnership Community Advisory Board**  
**Policy & Budget Subcommittee Meeting**  
**March 15, 2024**  
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*“Impact ain’t the word. It [guaranteed income] has brought me hope, confidence, and good relations. I’ve been able to do a lot of things, and I’ve been able to save. It’s kind of hard to explain, but I’ve been able to believe in myself more. I’ve had relief from stress. It’s brought me closer together with my friends and family. Just being able to know that I can have without running out. It’s been a huge thing in my life. This experience will be an impression on my life for many years to come.” — Murray, 55, Just Income Participant*

## **Guaranteed Income: Overview and Opportunity**

### Guaranteed Income is:

- A major avenue to address systemic racism and uplift economic justice.
- An anti-poverty, pro-opportunity program that centers individual empowerment, self-determination, and dignity.
- A way to build more equitable and healthy communities.
- A way to end the violence of poverty—the toxic stress and impacts of going hungry, feeling stressed, experiencing housing insecurity, and being acutely vulnerable.
- A path to uplift voices and choices.

**We talk a lot about the violence that poverty incites but not enough about the violence it inflicts. Poverty is a form of violence.** The movement for guaranteed income (GI) acknowledges poverty as a failing of our systems **not** our people. It recognizes poverty as a pervasive agent of harm that manifests across generations and goes beyond material deprivation to diminish and deny human potential. Many of the inequalities in our society stem from and are perpetuated by toxic narratives that shape our view of who is deserving of assistance and uplift. Guaranteed income is part of a call for a new economy that respects and values human difference and equips people to be agents and authors of their own lives.

In announcing Santa Clara County’s newest pilot, for justice-impacted individuals, Supervisor and Board President Susan Ellenberg stated, *“With this funding, the County has allocated a total of \$12 million for four basic income pilot programs to help participants build stable lives. A guaranteed basic income plays a significant role in solidifying our county safety net and countering the myth that poverty is a moral failing of individuals versus the result of systemic failures.”* Guaranteed income addresses the interface of barriers, vulnerabilities, harms, and negative outcomes that accrue with economic disadvantage. Financial security lays the groundwork for a healthy life and community: elevated well-being, safe and stable housing,

strong family networks, food security and enhanced nutrition, pathways to better employment and educational outcomes, and an abundance of intangible rewards and reliefs.

Guaranteed income is equity-based, data-driven, and prevention-focused. It responds with intent and authenticity to the “fierce urgency of now,” to quote Martin Luther King, Jr. Declining social mobility, widening income inequality, and rising living costs are impoverishing individuals, straining families, and fragmenting communities. Data from dozens of guaranteed income pilots around the country, targeted toward diverse populations, show uniformly positive impacts on health, belonging, and self-worth, among other concrete achievements, like paying off debt, boosting savings, and securing better jobs. Aside from providing for people’s basic needs, these regular, unconditional payments are building people up in other ways—through self-care; educational advancement; and time off from work to attend an interview for a better job, chaperone a child’s school field trip, or volunteer. Investing in and empowering individuals’ economic security is helping to build stronger, healthier, more cohesive and resilient communities.

Direct, recurring, unconditional cash payments are effective because cash can move quickly and reliably. As a means of operationalizing that at scale, guaranteed income is part of creating an **economy that works for everyone**. The pandemic reshaped public, governmental, and philanthropic perceptions of cash transfer as a pragmatic tool for advancing equity and providing direct relief. In 2020 Congress passed multiple rounds of stimulus payments followed by temporary enhancements to the Child Tax Credit (CTC) in 2021. The latter contributed to the largest decline in child poverty on record, especially for Black and brown children. Moreover, researchers found that the expanded CTC offered 10 times the return on its investment and that any program offering the same cash value would have similar effects (Garfinkel et al., 2022). During this same period, over 30 municipalities invested American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars into GI pilots in their communities to support diverse populations. In Contra Costa, the City of Concord allocated \$1.5M to fund a pilot to serve 120 participants. Santa Clara County also used \$2M in ARPA dollars to partially fund a pilot for justice-involved residents, which is currently in the planning and design phase.

Guaranteed income’s impact can be evidenced in objective metrics like the number of pilot participants who have paid off debt and started savings accounts (and the corresponding dollars this amounts to), but beyond that, it is measured in the words and experiences of GI participants—the transformative power of trust, the activated power of potential, and the restorative power of care. Pilot findings demonstrate that with economic stability and agency, individuals go beyond bare necessities, enabling them to actively engage in their own lives and contribute to the lives of others.

In their 2023 report “Shedding Light on Bay Area Poverty” (2024), the Tipping Point Community documented that most people who are poor in the Bay Area are working and derive minimal support from government mechanisms. In fact, half of Bay Area residents in poverty have one or more working-age adult in their family who is employed full-time for the entire year. In addition, 10.4% of those in poverty have adults who work full-time for part of the year, and

19.2% who work part-time. In other words, a job, even a full-time one, does not guarantee economic security in this region. More coordinated, targeted, and prevention-oriented responses are needed to reverse these trends and upend entrenched patterns of structural and systemic racism and inherent societal disadvantage.

Guaranteed income asks us to take a hard look at the obstacles people face to pursuing their dreams and help them to overcome them. In the Bay Area 43.5% of Latine and 41.9% of Black residents are living in or near poverty—more than double the rate for white residents (15.8%). This is a wealth *chasm*—calling it a wealth gap does not do justice to the extent of damage it has wrought and continues to inflict on our Black and brown communities. Poverty intersects with structural racism, overpolicing, underfunded public schools, persistent vulnerability, endemic violence, gender inequity, labor exploitation, and a perverse tax system. **It creates its own economy**—exploitative rents, banking fees, unfair labor practices, and more. It manufactures and reproduces social inequalities, individual trauma, and generational harms. Looking soberly and purposefully at these lineages and interconnections demands bifocal lenses that recognize how past informs present and peripheral vision that affirms our shared humanity. As Bryan Stevenson says, *“The opposite of poverty is not wealth. The opposite of poverty is Justice.”*

Although Contra Costa County has a relatively lower poverty rate and higher median income compared to other Bay Area counties, these statistics mask pervasive disparities and ongoing struggles: our county’s massive health, wealth, justice, educational, housing, and opportunity inequities and disparities cut deeply across racial, ethnic, and geographic lines. Our residents of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, housing insecurity, economic precarity, incarceration, and rent burdens. We can and must do better, particularly for our most vulnerable and multiply-impacted community members.

### **Guaranteed Income: Pilot Goals, Populations, and Structures**

Guaranteed income consists of unconditional, unrestricted cash payments distributed to a defined population for a set period of time. Payments made to participants typically range from \$300 to \$1,800 a month for periods of six months to three years. There are no work requirements, and participants are not restricted in their spending—the payments can be used to purchase items and opportunities that the participants themselves believe are worth the investment. Prevailing assumptions have maintained that conditional assistance best supports behavioral change, yet research suggests that these paternalistic forms of aid may actually inhibit positive outcomes, increase administrative costs, and promote widespread stigma (Columbino, 2015). Guaranteed income’s intent is to subvert these paradigms and promote agency, dignity, and trust. This is why payments are disbursed unconditionally rather than used as a tool for short-term behavioral compliance. No other social safety net program allows for this level of trust and individual agency and empowerment.

Pilots, which now number in the hundreds, have focused specifically on Black mothers, foster youth, unhoused or unstably housed individuals and families, students, formerly incarcerated individuals, and economically marginalized individuals in specific catchment areas (the term

pilot is what the different programs running in each place are called—like trials or experiments). These pilots have explicitly referenced and attempted to ameliorate the effects of generational poverty, the trauma of racial discrimination, and the deliberate under-resourcing of low-income communities and those of Color.

In ideation, design, and implementation, all pilots center prevention, harm reduction, equity, and addressing disproportionate impacts of racism, economic vulnerability, and/or social marginalization. However, no two pilots are alike: each is designed to respond to unique local needs and tailored to support them. Pilots range in disbursement amount, duration, and target population based on the landscape of need, goal-setting, and funding. Some pilots administer an open application process, where community members are invited to apply and notified of eligibility criteria. This process entails careful screening of applicants and often results in exponentially more people applying than can be included in the pilot. Screening procedures and eligibility requirements are a hybrid of light touch and rigorous. They are designed with an eye toward inclusivity and accessibility, meaning that participants aren't asked to provide onerous documentation but rather typically pre-selected based on criteria that may include a threshold for household income, housing status, jail or prison release date, single parent status, etc. or interviewed to attain more knowledge about their background and circumstances.

Some pilots elect to utilize a pre-determined sample pool that aligns with eligibility criteria. For example, in seeking to generate a sample representative of those living on very low incomes in Arlington and design that could confer two-generation impacts, the Arlington's Guarantee pilot drew from a pool of community members who received a DHS Housing Grant, had at least one child under 18, and earned no more than 30% of the area median income. The local Housing Grant pool provided an optimal sample because Arlington was able to protect locally-funded housing benefits, whereas federal Housing Choice Voucher benefits would not have been protected. At the same time, the Arlington's Guarantee partners were concerned about groups that may be underrepresented within this sample, so they created an additional carve-out for two populations: individuals re-entering the community after incarceration and undocumented heads of households, totaling 50 participants. This design represents the ingenuity and intentionality that is the hallmark of guaranteed income programs—an attempt to meet the needs of local communities, adapt participant thresholds proactively and responsively, and address system gaps and exclusions.

Research on payment frequency for GI pilots and other cash-assistance programs documents that monthly payments tend to be most helpful for working families (Sakabe, 2019), particularly given that most rent, bills, and other major expenses are paid on a monthly basis. A monthly dispensation allows individuals and households to budget more consistently and capably and reduces income volatility and its resulting consequences, e.g., payday loans and late fees. Notably, variation and flexibility abound here; some pilots have opted to include an up-front stabilization payment while others have disbursed a lump sum addition in their exit payment to support transition instead. Other optional pilot features include financial and wellness coaching, compensation of participants as Lived Experience advisors to serve in advocacy roles, and resource navigation and referral.

The disbursement amount is meant to make a meaningful impact on participants' lives. Its determination is multifactorial, involving consideration of the area's cost of living, number of participants, and planned duration. For example, some pilots disburse lower payments over a longer period of time, while others issue larger payments for shorter durations. Most pilots are co-designed with community members to ensure that they are responsive to and in alignment with the needs and desires of the populations they wish to serve. In sum, guaranteed income is a flexible instrument for achieving a singular end: greater financial security and stability to expand opportunities for economic mobility and enhanced well-being.

**While design and implementation varies considerably across pilots, it's worth noting that demographics, economic context, and spending data hold fairly constant, centering the lived reality of the nexus of racial, economic, and social disadvantage that defines access to financial security, housing stability, social protections, and other avenues and resources for health and well-being in this country.**

Pilot funding is a mix of private (philanthropic) and public dollars. In California, roughly half of the pilots are publicly funded, which is actually a shift from even 2019–2021, when most were funded with primarily private dollars. Because GI funds may affect a person's social safety net benefits and the payments are notably **not** intended to replace other supports, many pilots include counseling to help participants understand whether and how this may be the case. Pilot programs have also been encouraged to apply for benefit waivers. On February 28, 2024, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) issued a statement that under AB 120, GI payments would be exempt from consideration when determining eligibility and benefit amounts for CalWORKs, supplanting the need for county welfare departments to apply for waivers. This marks a notable example of the State's recognition that unconditional cash aid provided through GI payments is part of a larger effort to disrupt poverty and provide for people's basic needs which should not conflict with their ability to obtain other public benefits. As these pilots continually yield data on positive individual-, household-, and community-level outcomes, we are likely to see additional agency and benefits coordination. And in fact, GI has already ignited critical conversations across sectors and systems about how to use and leverage existing funds to enable direct cash transfers, e.g., Community Development Block Grants, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, ARPA, and AB 109 funds.

Lack of access to high-quality educational opportunities, health care, and social capital and connections; exploitative systems that drain wealth from low-income households; and an extractive economy that prioritizes profit over people exacerbate the inherent disadvantages of life-course determination by zip code. In recognition of these stubborn realities, guaranteed income seeks to disrupt the generational ripples of poverty and societal divestment, or the "economic stickiness" of those in lower socioeconomic quintiles. Extensive research has shown that children's income as adults is strongly related to their parents' income and has delineated the racial and ethnic disparities inherent in this pattern (Chetty, 2019; Isaacs, 2007). The lower your parents' income, the harder it is to move up. Nearly half of children born to families with incomes in the bottom 20% will remain in the bottom 20% as adults. Less than one in five will

climb to the top two quintiles. Meanwhile, 39% of children born in the top quintile will stay there. Because Black children are more likely to be born and raised in poverty, they are also far more likely to stay in poverty as adults. 54% of Black children born to families in the bottom quintile will stay there, and only a quarter will make it to the top 60% of earners.

Given the disproportionate numbers of Black and Latine people in jails and prisons, the effect of incarceration on individual wages also increases aggregate race and ethnic wage inequality, and ultimately reproduces social inequality. Incarceration can create lasting barriers to economic mobility for individuals and families, with ripple effects into communities and across generations. If we want to address the staggering levels of economic inequality and racial disparities that cleave at the mythology of the American dream, then we need to attend to the most vulnerable and tender places within our social structure, and that means the carceral system and the collateral consequences it imposes on individuals, families, and communities.

Advancing equity is inextricably linked to addressing exclusion. Two of the primary motivations for guaranteed income, particularly the dozens of pilots launched during the pandemic, are to fill equity gaps, specifically racial equity gaps, and expand the social safety net by reaching people who are often excluded from federal assistance and face inherent obstacles to economic stability and high levels of social disadvantage. Individuals reentering the community after incarceration experience both of these inequities. Getting a job, even in “ban the box” states, can be next to impossible without a work history, and, in a county like ours, with limited public transportation options, physical mobility also impacts financial mobility.

Below are some examples that highlight the variety and breadth of guaranteed income pilots  
*(Note: This is a small and random sampling and not intended to be comprehensive):*

- **City of Alameda Rise Up Alameda (CA):** \$4.6M ARPA allocation to provide \$1,000/month to 150 low-income Alameda households over a two-year period.
- **CoCoBig (CA):** Privately-funded pilot to support 20 Antioch adult residents with \$400/month and 10 Antioch former foster youth with \$200/month for a period of six months.
- **Cambridge RISE (MA):** Allocated \$21.6M in ARPA funds to make Cambridge the only city in the country to provide cash assistance to all families in poverty, with children at or under 21 years of age, under 250% of the federal poverty level.
- **ELEVATE Concord (CA):** Allocated \$1.5M in ARPA funds to launch a pilot that provides \$500/month over 12 months to 120 low-income families in addition to an up-front stabilization payment of \$2,500. Participants must be Concord residents, single parents with children under the age of 12, earning less than \$55,000/year. In the focus group that informed the pilot’s design, participants elected to receive the up-front payment and lower payments per month in lieu of a larger amount throughout the entire pilot period.

- **City of Los Angeles Economic Assistance Pilot (CA):** BIG:LEAP provides approximately 3,200 people with \$1,000/month for 12 months.
- **City of Oakland Resilient Families (CA):** A three-year cohort-based project where 600 participants received \$500/month. Cohort 1: Residents in a one-square-mile area of East Oakland with income below 50% of the Area Median Income and at least one child under 18; Cohort 2: Households living below 138% of the federal poverty level with at least one child under 18.
- **City of San Francisco Abundant Birth Project (CA):** Provided \$1,000/month over 12 months to 150 recipients, beginning in early pregnancy, to reduce racial birth disparities by easing economic stress. With the funds allotted through CDSS, this pilot is launching in four additional sites, **including Contra Costa.**
- **State of California:** In 2021 California launched the first ever statewide GI pilot, through the Department of Social Services, providing \$35MM to fund GI pilots. The first tranche was awarded in late 2022 to fund seven pilots across the state that will collectively support 1,975 Californians with payments between \$600 and \$1,200/month for 12 to 18 months.
- **County of Alameda Guaranteed Income Program for Former Foster Youth (CA):** 90 participants receive \$1,000/month for two years.
- **County of Los Angeles BREATHE program (CA):** 1,000 participants receive \$1,000/month for three years. More than 180,000 residents applied—95,000 on the first day applications opened. The participants were randomly selected.

**(Note: GI Pilots centering justice-impacted populations are detailed on pages 17–19).**

### **Guaranteed Income Pilots: Data Collection, Metrics, and Impact**

Data from more than 165 studies on 56 cash transfer programs in low- to medium-income countries show that cash transfer can reduce monetary poverty, improve school attendance and child health outcomes, and increase economic autonomy for beneficiaries (Baird et al., 2018; Hagen-Zanker et al. 2016). In the United States, both the concept and implementation of guaranteed income has gained tremendous momentum and urgency following the first mayor-led pilot in Stockton, California in 2019 and the deep inequities surfaced by the pandemic. Consequently, pilots have flourished over the past several years and now number in the hundreds, spanning coast to coast. In the range of studies and evaluations conducted to assess the impact of these programs, pilot participants overwhelmingly report positive outcomes, ranging from improved physical, mental, and emotional health to debt relief, better jobs, and increased access to educational opportunities.

Overall, the [research collected from over 30 completed pilots](#) aggregated on the Guaranteed Income Pilots Dashboard show uniformly positive impacts on health, belonging, and self-worth, economic stability, and family cohesion. While the data reveal that most participant spending is going toward basic needs, it is also clear that GI is building people up in other ways—through self-care; educational advancement; and time off from work to attend an interview for a better job, chaperone a child’s school field trip, or volunteer in community. The dashboard is a partnership between Stanford University’s Basic Income Lab, Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, and the Center for Guaranteed Income Research at the University of Pennsylvania. It provides public-facing spending data on 7,934 participants and granular information on over 30 pilots, a “global map of experiments” documenting the spread of guaranteed income around the world, and, crucially, participant stories. This interactive tool is a vital means of researching, documenting, and tracking the implementation of pilots throughout the country.

Figures 1.1–1.4 show representative datasets from the dashboard highlighting the City of Providence’s Guaranteed Income Program, which ran from November 2021–April 2023.

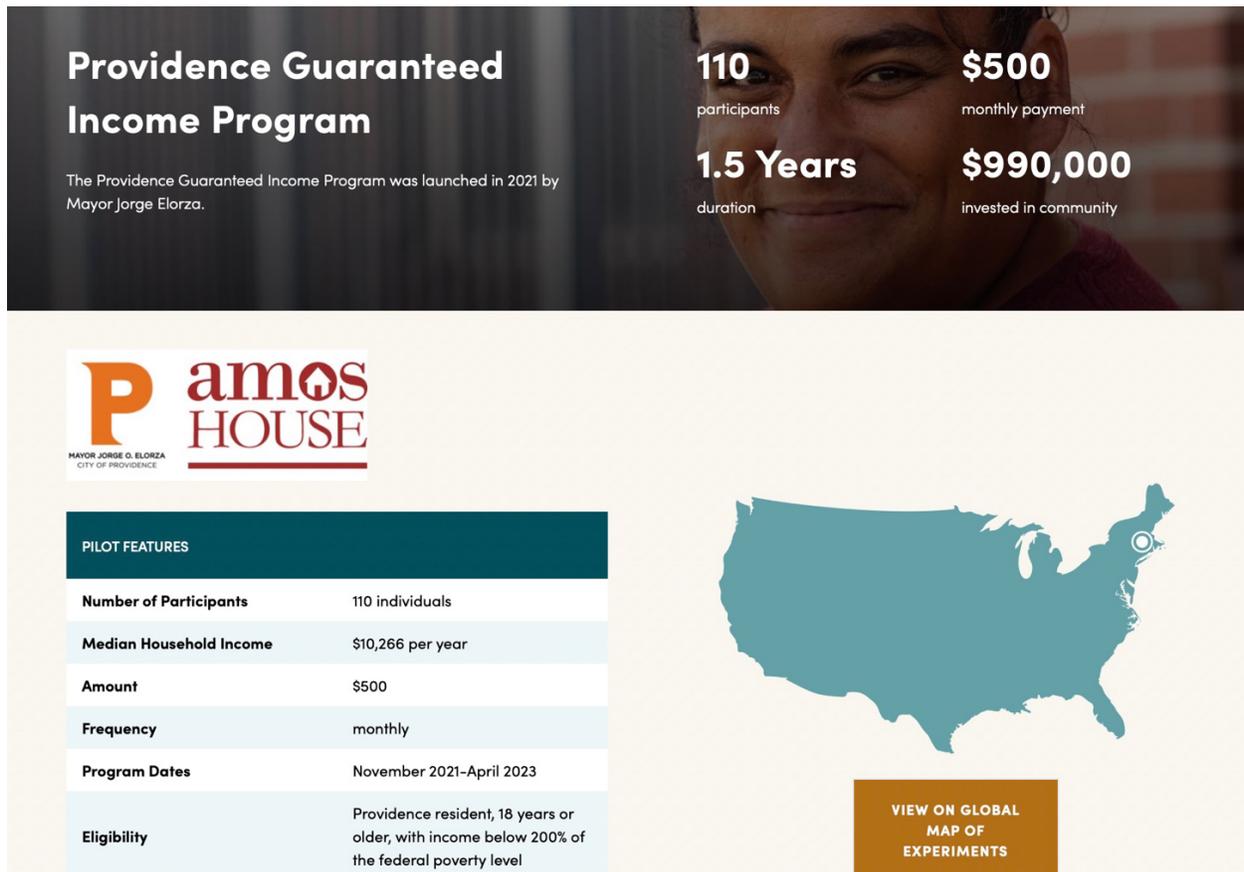


Figure 1.1. Providence Guaranteed Income Program Data Snapshot (GI Pilots Dashboard)

## About the Providence Guaranteed Income Program

The Providence Guaranteed Income Program is administered by Amos House and is being evaluated by the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Guaranteed Income Research. Researchers are looking at the impact this supplemental income has on participants' economic volatility, employment status, physical and mental well-being, civic engagement, and parental engagement in their children's education. Participants were selected from an applicant pool via a lottery conducted by our research team, which was weighted to ensure that the participants were representative of the Providence population living in poverty. The participants' average monthly income, pre-pilot, was \$1,094, meaning these payments represent a 46% average increase in their income. The initial 12 months of our pilot were funded entirely through private philanthropy. In the summer of 2022, the City was able to extend the pilot for an additional six months, thanks to our American Rescue Plan award. (photo credit: Josephine Sittenfeld)

Data last updated on 9/30/2023.



## Demographic Data for Pilot Participants

MEDIAN ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME ②		GENDER		RACE		ETHNICITY	
<b>PGIP</b>	\$10,266	<b>Male</b>	24.00%	<b>White</b>	31.00%	<b>Hispanic</b>	45.00%
<b>Providence, RI ①</b>	\$64,184	<b>Female</b>	76.00%	<b>African American</b>	19.00%	<b>Non-Hispanic</b>	55.00%
<b>Annual Household Income (Mean) ②</b>	\$12,361	<b>Other</b>	0.00%	<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	2.00%	<b>PRIMARY LANGUAGE AT HOME</b>	
<b>Sample Size</b>	110	<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		<b>Asian</b>	5.00%	<b>English</b>	73.64%
<b>Avg. Age of Respondent</b>	42	<b>Married</b>	11.82%	<b>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	2.00%	<b>Spanish</b>	23.64%
<b>Avg. Children in Household</b>	1	<b>Single</b>	80.00%	<b>Latino</b>	0.00%	<b>Other</b>	2.73%
<b>Avg. Household Size</b>	3	<b>Partnered/In-Relationship</b>	8.18%	<b>Other/Mixed</b>			
		<b>CHILDREN IN HOUSEHOLD</b>					
		<b>Yes</b>	61.00%				
		<b>No</b>	39.00%				

Figure 1.2. Providence Guaranteed Income Program Demographic Data (GI Pilots Dashboard)

## Economic Context for Pilot Participants

The guaranteed income pilot launched during a period of dynamic change and economic challenges for pilot participants. The chart below situates this pilot in the context of unemployment and inflation.

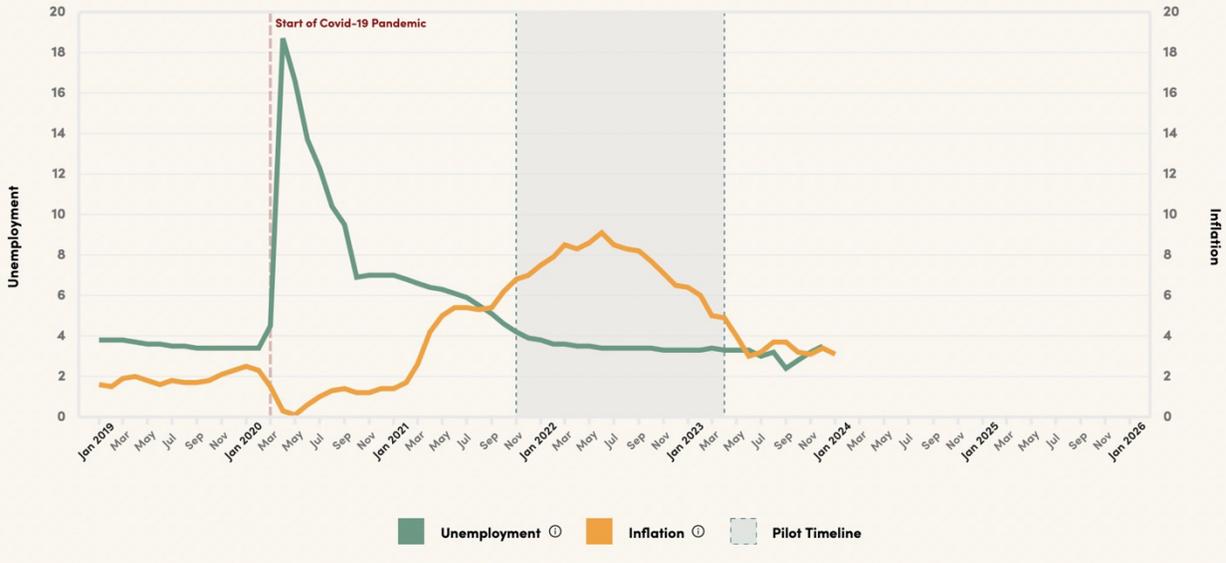


Figure 1.3. Providence Guaranteed Income Program Participant Economic Context (GI Pilots Dashboard)

## Spending Breakdown

The data in this pie chart shows aggregate spending for guaranteed income participants in Providence, RI. This includes all non-cash expenditures from the participants' bank accounts, not just those that are from the guaranteed income they received.

### SPENDING BREAKDOWN

Retail sales and services accounted for the largest share of spending, at 37.05%, followed by Food and groceries (30.54%) and Housing & Utilities (9.41%).

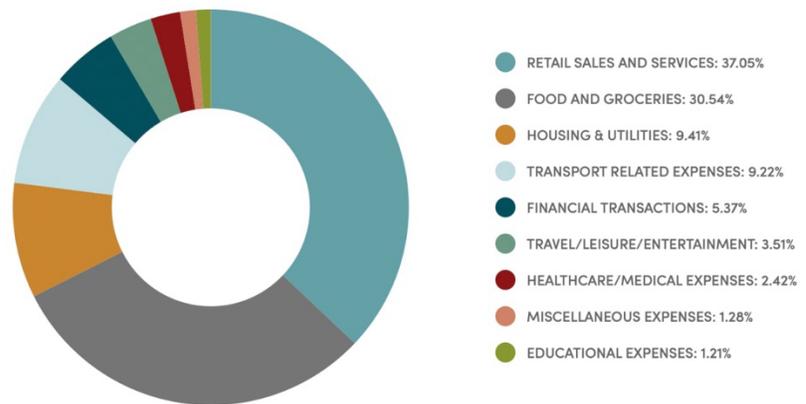


Figure 1.4. Providence Guaranteed Income Program Spending Breakdown Data (GI Pilots Dashboard)

The Arlington’s Guarantee (VA) pilot is part of the national [Guaranteed Income Community of Practice](#), which consists of approximately 150 other pilots, economists, legislators, and researchers working to address the country’s broken systems, exploitative and extractive economy, and entrenched racial and ethnic disparities. Running from September 2021–November 2023, Arlington’s Guarantee awarded a total of 200 households with children under 30% AMI \$500/month for 18 months. Of the 200 participants, 25 were returning from incarceration and 25 were undocumented. The pilot ran with an overall budget of \$2M, of

which \$1.8M went directly into participants' hands and approximately \$200,000 to administrative costs.

Like Arlington's, many of the recent pilots have been designed with an eye to scale in order to move GI from pilot to policy. Collectively, they seek to uplift the value, efficiency, and efficacy of providing individuals, specifically marginalized and/or vulnerable populations, with unrestricted direct cash payments to establish an income floor in this country. Their design involves an evaluation component that is rigorous, mixed methods, and often conducted as a scientific randomized controlled trial, with a treatment and control group, such that findings can be leveraged toward credibly building a policy platform. Given that guaranteed income centers the dignity, agency, and trust of participants, data collection is not solely quantitative. Most pilots involve surveying, in-depth interviews with all or selected participants, and/or other qualitative evaluations.

The Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) actively partnered with university researchers to ensure that the lessons learned from the pilot were accurate, transparent, and community-focused.

Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania who studied the SEED program found that participants:

- Reported spending their guaranteed income on everyday necessities and emergencies including items such as groceries, utility bills, credit card debt, and dental work.
- Were less anxious and depressed, and showed statistically significant improvements in emotional health, energy over fatigue, and emotional wellbeing.
- Improved their overall financial resilience; after one year, the number of recipients who could afford for an unexpected cash expense more than doubled, from 25% to 52%.
- Had better energy and physical functioning.
- Exercised greater agency to explore new opportunities (West and Castro 2023).

Another study on Washington, DC's pilot THRIVE East of the River found that participants reported substantially better mental health and lower rates of food insecurity after receiving the cash payments compared with other people with low incomes, both nationally and in DC (Bogle et al. 2022). While some opponents have expressed concern that cash transfers will make recipients less likely to work and more likely to consume temptation goods, such as drugs and alcohol, most studies have found neither of these to be true (Akee et al. 2010; Burtless 1986; West and Castro 2023; Salehi-Isfahani et al. 2017; Baird, McKenzie, and Ozler 2018; Vera-Cossio 2021; Gertler, Martinez, and Rubio-Codina 2012; Evans and Popova 2017). In fact, SEED's participants found full-time employment at more than twice the rate of non-participants.

The Magnolia Mother's Trust pilot ran in Jackson, Mississippi, a majority-Black city, with 82% of the population identifying as Black or African American. 26% of its residents are defined as experiencing poverty, and the largest demographic living in poverty are females 25–34, followed by females 6–11 and females 35–44. This pilot supported 30 low-income, Black mothers by providing \$1,000/month for 12 months.

Participant Outcomes included:

- First-year cohort collectively paid off over \$10,000 in debt
- More mothers were able to prepare 3 homemade meals/day for their family
- The number of mothers in the second-year cohort who could pay all bills on time jumped from 27% to 83%

Arlington’s Guarantee reflects increased employment and incomes as a result of participation, refuting dismissive and uninformed claims that a program like guaranteed income disincentivizes employment. Figure 2 shows the pilot’s impact on participants’ employment and income, reflected comparatively.

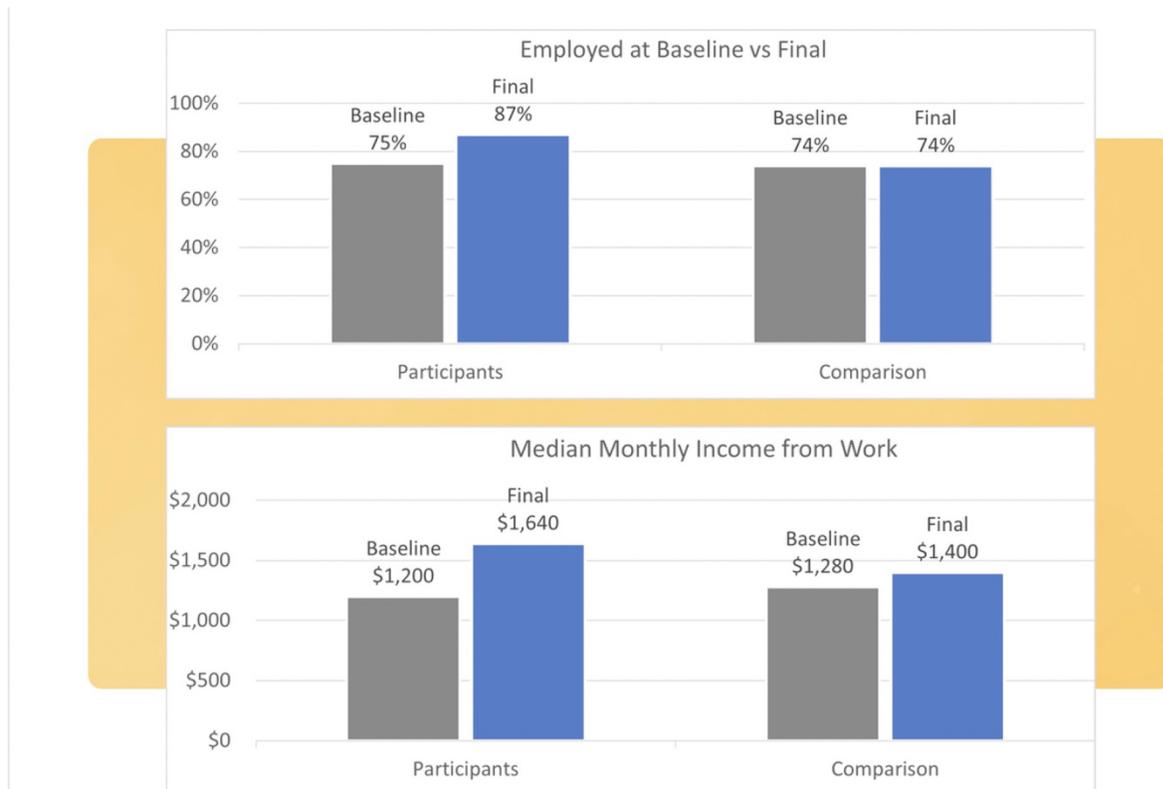
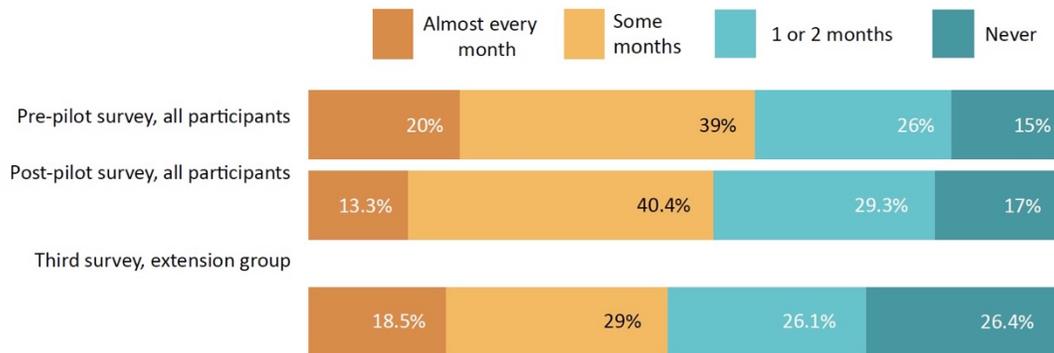


Figure 2. Arlington’s Guarantee Increased Employment and Income (Arlington’s Guarantee Final Report, 2024)

Another example of how survey data documents impact is shown in Figure 3, which centers New Mexico’s pilot’s effect on pilot participants’ housing security, allowing more participants to pay their rent or mortgage on time.

### Post-Pilot and Extension Group Participants Were Less Likely to Experience Difficulty Paying Their Rent or Mortgage on Time

Question: In the last 12 months, how often did you or another member of your household experience difficulties in paying the rent or mortgage payment on time?



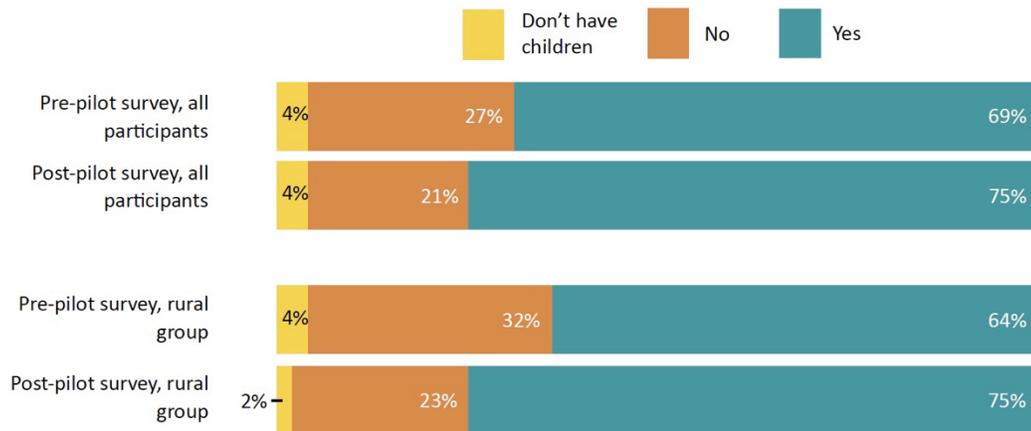
Sources: Pre-pilot survey of 207 GI pilot program participants, April 16-31, 2022; post-pilot survey of 188 GI pilot program participants, Feb. 9-14, 2023; and third survey of 39 extension group participants and 40 control group participants, July 22-31, 2023  
 NEW MEXICO VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Figure 3. Guaranteed Income: Increasing Employment and Helping Families Thrive Pilot, New Mexico (Final Report, 2023)

Figure 4 below shows the impact on family well-being and children’s academic success, demonstrating that guaranteed income’s benefits genuinely ripple across generations, helping everyone in a household be in a better position to thrive.

### Post-Pilot Participants’ Children Were More Likely to be at Their Grade Level or to Graduate

Question: Is your child on track to complete their grade level and graduate?



Sources: Pre-pilot survey of 207 GI pilot program participants, April 16-31, 2022; post-pilot survey of 188 GI pilot program participants, Feb. 9-14, 2023; pre-pilot survey of 73 rural GI pilot program participants, April 16-31, 2022; and post-pilot survey of 60 rural GI pilot program participants, Feb. 9-14, 2023  
 NEW MEXICO VOICES FOR CHILDREN

Figure 4. Guaranteed Income: Increasing Employment and Helping Families Thrive Pilot, New Mexico (Report, 2023)

Lastly, Figure 5 shows how the participants in Arlington’s Guarantee reflected their expenditures over a six-month window, based on a question posed at each survey interval.

Note that, as with most pilots we have data on, the funds are overwhelmingly used to pay for basic needs.

**“Within the past 6 months, what have you been able to do with the extra income from the Arlington’s Guarantee program that you would not have been able to do without it?”**

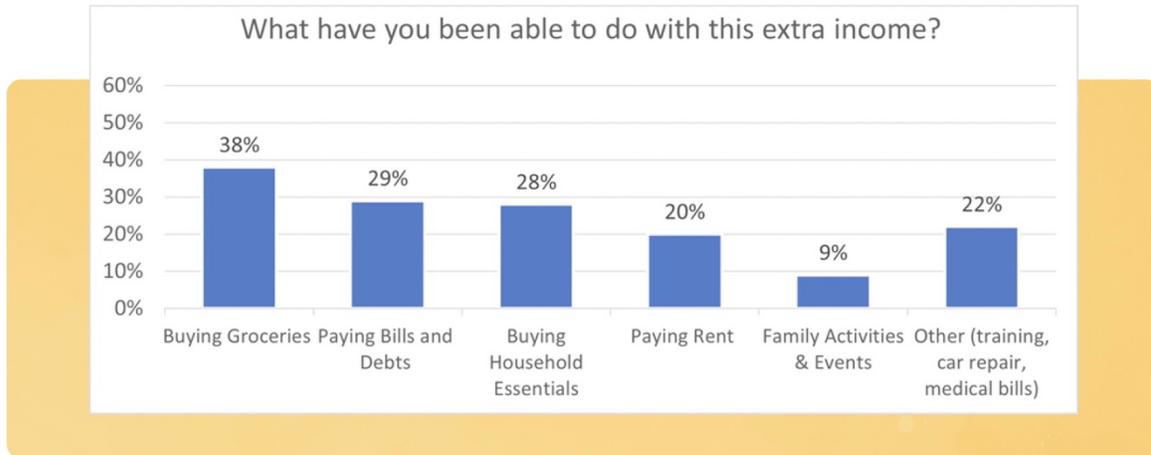


Figure 5. Arlington’s Guarantee Survey Interval Question on Spending Extra Income (Arlington’s Guarantee Final Report, 2024)

Not all municipalities or pilots have the budget scope or intent to afford full-scale academic evaluations or implementation of a full randomized control trial, which can number in the hundreds of thousands for that component alone. Some seek to maximize their budget’s reach by ensuring that the lion’s share lands in the hands of participants, and thus operate more leanly in domains like administration, advocacy, and evaluation. We should not assume that the metrics and outcomes of these pilots are any less rigorous and meaningful because of this design decision. The voices of lived experience across pilots repeatedly attest to the power of cash as care. As one Arlington’s Guarantee participant stated, ***“It’s [guaranteed income] made me feel that I exist in the community.”***

Guaranteed Income is a potent example of systems disruption abetted by narrative change accomplished through resource redistribution applied with a racial equity lens. It rewrites both surface scripts and deep narratives about deservedness, dignity, trust, and allocation of public resources; provides a model for centering directly-impacted community members in policy interventions and solutions; and, if purposefully designed, can attend not just to gaps but overlaps—not just to those who are underserved but to those who are "overserved" across our systems. It is also a direct avenue to increase the economic resilience, safety, and prosperity of our communities.

## The Case and Conditions for Pilots for Justice-Impacted Individuals

*“And although it only lasted 12 months, it provided stepping stones for success. This program had a major positive effect on many people's lives, who would otherwise have fallen back into the vicious cycle of repeat offenses, continued homelessness, and re-incarceration. It gave us hope. And hope goes a long way for people who are accustomed to hopelessness.” —V., 40*

In 2022–23 the pilot Just Income (FL) provided \$7,600 each to 155 individuals recently released from incarceration. One of the pilot’s participants voiced the dread and anticipation that accrues with returning home: *“I don’t know what was scarier—going into prison or coming out,”* they said. If a guaranteed income generally responds to the “fierce urgency of now,” for people returning to their communities after incarceration, that fierceness and urgency is exacerbated tenfold. Many individuals reentering community were already vulnerable and economically marginalized when they entered jail or prison; the reentry process creates yet more vulnerabilities and barriers, in effect becoming part of a larger system of inherent and ongoing disadvantage that impedes individual success and the overall health, safety, and well-being of our communities. Guaranteed income seeks to interrupt the revolving door of poverty and incarceration.

A pilot for the reentry population aligns with the life course framework rooted in public health, which considers the critical stages, transitions, and settings where large differences can be made in promoting or restoring health and wellbeing. Post-release is stressful, disorienting, and incredibly challenging. Many people—*too many people*—have neither a place to go home to or income or employment awaiting them. As a direct cash payment that come with no strings attached for a defined period of time, guaranteed income meets a threshold of urgency and ameliorates specific barriers swiftly and profoundly. It is a critical lever within a broader system of resourcing and care that is designed to *actually* increase a formerly incarcerated person's chance of successful community integration and individual accomplishment.

Over the past decade, the cost of imprisoning one person in California has increased by more than 90%, reaching a record-breaking \$132,860 annually, according to state finance documents. That’s nearly twice as expensive as the annual undergraduate tuition—\$66,640—at the University of Southern California, the most costly private university in the state. In response to the specific and urgent needs of our state’s justice-involved population and the exorbitant costs of incarceration, recent legislative developments have evidenced policymakers’ increasing acknowledgement that cash represents an essential investment in individuals’ futures and public safety. In 2022–2023, the State of California invested \$52.5M in one-time funding to develop the Helping Justice-Involved Reenter Employment (HIRE) initiative, **of which 30% can be used for unrestricted payments**. Administered by the Workforce Development Board, the HIRE initiative ensures that individuals returning home from incarceration have access to critical reentry services coupled with cash to cover their most essential needs. Included in Senator Sydney K. Kamlager’s (D – Los Angeles) 2022 legislative package was SB 1304, which sought to

increase the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) provision of gate money upon individuals' release to \$1,300. Notably, the current amount of \$200 has not budgeted since 1973. In her introduction to the package including SB 1304, Senator Kamlager stated, *"Too often we overlook—or worse, criminalize—the plight of Californians who are working to make ends meet. We let criminal records hinder the ability of formerly incarcerated individuals to find jobs and allow parents to be separated from their children based on weak standards of proof. Now is the time to stop criminalizing poverty and start prioritizing economic stability. This legislative package sets out to do just that."* The bill passed all hurdles in the legislature only to be vetoed by Governor Newsom in September 2022.

In California, recidivism rates continue to be high. The staggering cost of living coupled with a lack of sufficient resources, pro-active opportunities, and pro-protective measures relegates justice-impacted individuals to an increasingly vulnerable position. Despite diminished opportunities, justice-impacted people face enormous demands for money and stability. In their advocacy for a GI pilot for justice-impacted individuals, Santa Clara County Supervisors Ellenberg and Chavez noted as their primary reasons for recommendation as follows: *"This program would not only reduce recidivism and protect County residents from becoming future crime victims but also would reduce overall costs to the County by keeping program participants from returning to the criminal-legal system. People make better choices when they have better options."*

Achieving effective reentry with dignity and reintegration with support requires a holistic and strategic approach, with economic assistance and stabilization as a key lever and metric. Many members of the public are simply uninformed about the tremendous odds people face when they are released, what is expected of them, and how hard it is to achieve, often without material, social, or emotional support, without gainful employment, savings, many in debt. As Murray, a participant in Gainesville's Just Income pilot said, ***"Most people when they're released from prison have some sort of parole or probation. And you have to be able to afford urinalysis, court fees, probation fees, et cetera, and most of the time, like in my case, I was released with no money, no nothing. You're subject to poverty all over again, recidivism, and homelessness."*** Given this hostile landscape, how can we expect people to even make it to the first paycheck, if they are lucky enough to even find work? Recidivism is directly related to socioeconomic disadvantages that accrue with barriers to reentry and reintegration—what are known as the collateral consequences that often impede a true "second chance." In their background research on pilot design, Just Income's administrators found that 23% of probation violations in Gainesville were due to economic plain old lack of money. Moreover, cash assistance has been linked to lower rates of arrest (Palmer et al. 2019).

***"I want to go back home and not be a burden on my family."*** —Anonymous

Robust data show that neighborhoods with the highest rates of incarceration often track directly with those that have lower-performing/under-resourced schools and that Black men in

historically redlined neighborhoods have been hyperincarcerated. This concentration of mass incarceration contributes to further neighborhood-level disadvantage, creating an environment where a large proportion of the population experiences barriers to employment, education, housing, and social services, in addition to destabilization of social and family networks. The additional ripple effects are spatial as well as temporal—reaching across communities and generations. In this landscape, the cost of lost or missed opportunity far outweighs the cost of providing it.

Less than a dozen pilots have thus far focused on justice-impacted populations, but in my meetings with GI advocates and practitioners around the country, I have noted much broader interest in uplifting and serving the needs of this population through guaranteed income.

Pilots for justice-impacted populations are as follows:

- **Arlington’s Guarantee (VA):** This pilot did not exclusively focus on justice-involved individuals, but, based on the recognition that this population would be underrepresented in its chosen sample, they created a carve-out for 25 individuals returning from incarceration, who received \$500/month for 18 months.
- **Chicago Future Fund (IL):** In 2021, Equity and Transformation (EAT) established the Chicago Future Fund (CFF), which provided \$500 each month for 18 months to 30 system-impacted residents of Chicago’s West Garfield Park neighborhood. To qualify for the program, participants had to be 18–35 years old, earn less than \$12,000 per year, and be formerly incarcerated. The initial cash disbursement was November 15, 2021, and the final disbursement was April 2023. It is notable that the results from the CFF pilot program (just released in November 2023) find no support for the main criticism of GI programs—that giving people cash will cause them to work less. Most CFF participants reported continued involvement in the labor market, having either continued to accept full-time jobs or short-term positions when they were available or having remained active in applying for job vacancies.
- **Community Love Fund (nationwide):** Established in 2021, the fund will provide 17 formerly incarcerated and four currently incarcerated women with \$500/month for 12 months across four different prison systems. This program is the first of its kind to disburse direct, recurring cash relief to people currently behind bars.
- **Excel, StepUp Durham (NC):** 109 participants were randomly selected by the Center for Guaranteed Income Research to receive \$600/month for one year. The pilot ran from March 2022–February 2023. Participant eligibility criteria: Released from prison (NC State prison, a prison in another state, or federal prison) within the last 60 months (five years) prior to application, returning to a Durham address (City or County), and with an income below 60% 2021 Durham-Chapel Hill AMI.
- **4-CT (CT):** The Elm City Reentry Pilot currently has 40 individuals receiving \$500/month for 12 months. The pilot is funded through private philanthropy and was developed in

partnership with Project MORE, New Haven's reentry welcome center, and the City of New Haven. Additionally, the Bridgeport & New Haven Health Equity Pilot provides 30 individuals returning from incarceration with diagnosed chronic diseases with \$500/month for six months. It is also funded by private philanthropy.

- **Just Income (FL):** This pilot, operating in Alachua County, disbursed \$874k over 12 months, amounting to \$7,600 each distributed to 155 individuals from January 2022–February 2023. Participants were issued an up-front payment of \$1,000 in the first month, followed by \$600 for the remaining eleven. Just Income is designed by and run through the organization Community Spring, a grassroots organization dedicated to economic justice. Community Spring recently raised funds to launch another cohort, with monthly payments beginning January 15, 2024. All recipients are Alachua County, Florida residents released from prison or jail with a felony, or began felony probation on or after June 3, 2023. Following an application and random selection process, individuals will receive financial support as part of Community Spring's commitment to providing sustained economic empowerment to formerly incarcerated people. As with the first cohort, Just Income administrators realized that 24 months would have been an ideal duration but 12 months was all they could raise funds for.
- **Restorative Reentry Fund (CA):** In 2021, Community Works launched the country's first GI pilot for people coming home after incarceration, with funding from the Remy Fund for Racial and Environmental Justice and COVID-19: A Just East Bay Response Fund at the East Bay Community Foundation. The fund provided 38 people with \$1,000/month for 12 months and \$500/month for an additional six months, totaling \$15,000/individual over the course of the pilot, which ran from October 2022–March 2024.
- **Returning Citizen Stimulus (RCS):** This unprecedented cash transfer program was the largest in history to support people leaving incarceration. The RCS distributed more than \$24 million to 10,500 people who were released from prison at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, including over 5,000 in California and more than 1,000 in the Bay Area. RCS was conceived by the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) as correctional facilities decreased their imprisoned populations and people returned to one of the most challenging employment markets in recent history. They have now coalesced partners to launch the Coalition for Reentry Cash, which helped advance the HIRE Initiative referenced previously and continues to build advocacy for cash support for reentry populations around the country.
- **Richmond Resilience Initiative (VA):** The third cohort of this five-year initiative in the City of Richmond specifies eligibility criteria that includes justice involvement. The Richmond Resilience Initiative (RRI), Mayor Levar Stoney's guaranteed income pilot, was established in 2020 to support residents in the city of Richmond, Virginia impacted by the 'cliff effect.' Through its partnership with Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and UpTogether, the City of Richmond's Office of Community Wealth Building in the Human Services portfolio, is engaging individuals and families who neither make a living wage

nor qualify for federal benefits due to their household income. RRI, now on its third cohort, strives to help residents thrive and not merely survive by offering a \$250-\$500 monthly supplement to their income for 24 consecutive months. The Richmond Resilience Initiative is supported through funding provided by Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, the Robins Foundation, the Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, and ARPA.

- **Rubicon Returning Home Career Grant (CA):** 20 participants received a \$1,500 monthly stipend for 18 months, concluding in October 2023. The cohort was limited to referrals received from eligible Community Based Organizations (CBOs) providing pre-release and post-release services to justice-involved adults. Select CBO partners nominated participants engaged in their programs and services for whom this opportunity would alleviate barriers to employment and career mobility. In addition to financial support, the partner CBOs provided one-on-one mentorship and goal support.
- **Santa Clara County (CA):** In 2023 the County of Santa Clara announced and funded their fourth GI pilot, intended to serve justice-involved individuals. The Board of Supervisors approved a total allocation of \$4M for this initiative, with \$1M derived from AB 109 funds, earmarked to support approximately 50 reentry clients who are transition-aged youth for two years. The total pilot population will be at least 100 participants, with funding drawn from additional sources.

People reentering the community have served their time. So the question is why do we keep punishing them? How can we stem the revolving door that presents innumerable barriers to successfully staying out? When we train our eye on divesting from punishment and investing in justice, we architect new pathways of affirmation and opportunity. This pilot aligns with AB 109's intent to promote justice reinvestment; the CAB's desire to allocate the reserves to fund data-driven, research-based, and innovative initiatives that cut across siloes and address service gaps and unmet needs; and our county's increasing turn toward equity-focused goals and metrics. But most of all, it aligns with a fundamental belief in human dignity, trust, responsibility, and possibility.

### **Budget Considerations and Design Recommendations**

***"This program has changed my life. And it makes a person want to do what's right when there is someone on their side trying to push them forward, and if you aren't being pushed forward, well, you're falling back in the hole."***

**—S (no age given)**

**Trust**—something which many incarcerated individuals have often learned to live years without giving or receiving—and **dignity**—another casualty of the prison system—are the cornerstones of guaranteed income programs. As one-time funds, the AB 109 reserves offer an excellent opportunity to pursue innovative pilots, like guaranteed income, that have shown phenomenal success but have yet to be robustly implemented in our county. This is a critical moment for

Contra Costa to address the preventable and lamentable pipeline between prison and homelessness and numerous other devastating impacts and outcomes.

Guaranteed income provides a robust and sustained buffer for people to get back on their feet and *stay* on them, providing the breathing room and supportive pathway people need to attain resources and fulfill their personal goals. As noted previously, budgets for GI pilots vary considerably. Santa Clara County offers the closest analog to Contra Costa in terms of geographic proximity, government level, and allocation source. Thus, my recommendation would be in line with theirs: **to fund a pilot for justice-impacted individuals with at least \$1M in AB 109 reserves.**

An allocation of \$1M would provide flexibility to fund **50 people at \$800/month for a duration of 18 months.** Total direct cost of the disbursements would equal **\$720,000**, which would leave an ample amount (**\$280,000**) for administration and subcontracting for evaluation, outreach, and other costs as determined. Note that this is just a potential scenario to highlight how a \$1M allocation *could* be spent. **As I explain in the next two paragraphs, the design should emerge from a community-focused, transparent, and inclusive process that meaningfully and accountably engages impacted residents and families.**

Notably, many of the pilots geared to support reentry populations are designed and/or administered by formerly incarcerated people, one of whom shared that the program's goal was to "unlock the inherent potential of our justice-impacted neighbors." Melanie Jimenez Perez, who manages Santa Clara County's program, said that "Stakeholder input will help us solidify a justice-involved program and evaluation design grounded in how to best serve justice-involved individuals, with input from the individuals we aim to serve." Santa Clara is currently developing eligibility criteria for their pilot in consultation with community stakeholders, including those with lived experience in the justice system, and an independent evaluator.

Centering people with lived experience expertise and justice-impacted residents in ideation and design is vital to Contra Costa's broader racial equity and social justice work. We must **lift up and listen to** the voices of the people who are the experts on our broken systems and know how best to re-create them. If the Community Advisory Board, Community Corrections Partnership, and Board of Supervisors elects to fund this pilot, community partners and our justice-impacted residents need to be at the center of this effort to build it with care and credibility. This is a unique and vital opportunity to invest in and leverage your community's expertise. It's imperative that justice-impacted residents have an equal seat at the table in designing this pilot, as they have in others.

***"When you are a felon, it's automatically like nobody wants to give you a chance. People are overlooked, but I've seen the most talented, creative people behind bars. I want people to know that this [guaranteed income] is giving a lot of people an opportunity to grow."* —Izzy, Just Income Participant**