Dear Partners and Friends,

As we come to the end of another year that has thrown us so many ongoing challenges, from Hurricane Ida to COVID-19, we look optimistically toward what 2022 will bring. We feel immense gratitude for all of the learning opportunities and support that we have received over the past year. We have witnessed and participated in many wins, but the most important win is the reaffirmation that Operation Restoration’s model is both impactful and needed. We are a directly-impacted, women-led organization that exists to serve and advocate for women and girls involved in the criminal legal system. 87 percent of the women who work at Operation Restoration are impacted by incarceration. This reality enables us to operate from a lens of empathy and non-judgment. We create and operate programming that embodies hope, restoration, and possibility. We invite you to hear from both our participants and our staff members about what empathy at Operation Restoration meant to them in 2021.

Over the past year, we have offered many services and programs in response to our community members’ needs. These initiatives range from providing safe and stable housing, accessing education, and career planning. Operation Restoration’s Hope House NOLA provided housing for over ten women during 2021. While at Hope House NOLA, the women have been able to reunite with their families, gain employment and stability, and transition into contributing members of society. Shaquetha Crosby recently transitioned from Hope House NOLA into her own apartment, purchased a vehicle, and gained employment at Operation Restoration.
In 2021, we strengthened and expanded our educational programming to create new career pathways and remove barriers to education for currently and formerly incarcerated women. The Women’s FIRST Clinic, provided teaching, tutoring, transportation, and childcare to support 22 women seeking to obtain their high school equivalency diploma. In partnership with Tulane University, our College in Prison Program at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) offered courses to 35 women who are currently enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts in Social Science program.

OR has developed the infrastructure for two educational programs that will begin accepting students in the coming year. Our Lab Assistant Program prepares women to work in a laboratory healthcare setting, obtain immediate employment upon release, and become licensed in the state of Louisiana. This is a partnership with LCIW and Delgado Community College. Our Women’s Incarceration History Project promotes a new perspective on the history of women’s imprisonment in the state of Louisiana by training incarcerated women in historical research methods. This will expand their access to archival materials and offer opportunities to present their findings in public venues.

The Safety and Freedom Fund (SFF) is intentional in its work to end the cash bail system in the city of New Orleans. SFF is led by formerly incarcerated women. Our goal is to end the criminalization of race and poverty. The Safety and Freedom Fund not only provides bail assistance – they also provide support services that clients may need while their cases are pending.

In 2021, Operation Social Services received 700 rapid response requests from 300 women and girls impacted by incarceration, which resulted in over $250,000 in direct assistance.

One of Operation Restoration’s core values is to amplify the voices of women and girls impacted by incarceration. In 2021, Operation Restoration hosted forums and symposiums to create spaces where our community’s voices could be heard. One of our forums, “Politics at the Lunchtable,” featured a candid conversation with Orleans Parish District Attorney Jason Williams, Assistant District Attorney Teneé Felix, and Orleans Criminal District Judge Nandi Campbell, where some of our major concerns were addressed.
In 2021, our Executive Director, Syrita Steib, received recognition from organizations such as Young Leadership Council, New Orleans CityBusiness, and Biz New Orleans, for her work supporting women and girls impacted by incarceration. She was also selected to serve a three-year term on the Bureau of Governmental Research’s board of directors.

In 2022, we will continue to operate programming that embodies hope, restoration, and possibility. While expanding our efforts driven first and foremost by the voices of women and girls impacted by incarceration.

Thank you for your support in 2021! We look forward to seeing what we will accomplish together in 2022.