Letter from MGI Leadership

As we close out 2021, we’re struck by the contrasts of our current moment.

That we are ending two chaotic years for the American economy, yet were able to actually lift people out of poverty at record levels through the unprecedented power of cash. That our communities are still struggling under the weight of an economy that hasn’t worked for working people in decades, but we made huge advancements toward ending child poverty this year with the passage of the expanded Child Tax Credit – essentially a guaranteed income for nearly every parent in the country. That brings us to the largest contrast of all: that we have polling proving a bipartisan majority of voters want a federal guaranteed income program and dozens of mayor-led pilots across the country, yet we are still lacking a federal guaranteed income program.

And so, as we look ahead to the next 12 months, we are setting the ambitious goal of doing just that. It’s important for us to be clear that no number of pilots will ever address the deep, structural issues that lead to people living in poverty or struggling to cling to the middle class. While we understand the value MGI pilots will have in offering the world an unparalleled amount of data on the efficacy of guaranteed income, our goal remains passing a national policy to offer the dignity and self-determination financial security affords to all who need it.

A large part of passing such a sweeping measure is creating the space to do so. To that end, our work in 2022 will focus on the emerging field of narrative change. While it’s been a hallmark of grassroots organizing and social justice work for decades, its value is too often neglected by those in traditional positions of power and influence. We aim to change that, and we’ve already started. Our partnership with renowned writer Roxane Gay to showcase the work of five writers imagining a world of abundance rather than scarcity, Essays for a Guaranteed Income, introduced our work to millions of people outside the think tank and political worlds. We’ll continue to advance our efforts to introduce the power of guaranteed income to the masses through a year-long narrative change campaign that begins with messaging research and focus groups and ends with educating the public through creative vehicles such as film and television.

Our country has summoned the political will to make changes many thought impossible 20 months ago – policies centered on unrestricted cash that have shifted agency toward everyday people for the first time in half a century, and supported communities of color in particular. So while it may still seem audacious to some, we believe in a radical vision – one in which no child in the richest country in the world suffers the violence of poverty, and no adult does either. That is the promise of a guaranteed income.

In Service,

Melvin Carter, Eric Garcetti and Michael D. Tubbs
WHEREAS, the U.S. is one of the wealthiest countries in the world but prosperity and well-being are not broadly shared. Nearly 40% of Americans cannot afford a single $400 emergency, and rising income inequality is compounded by a growing racial wealth gap; and

WHEREAS, the median white worker made 28% more than the typical Black worker and 35% more than the median Latinx worker in the last quarter of 2019, and the median wealth of white families was more than $100,000 while the median wealth of Black families was approximately $10,000 prior to the coronavirus pandemic; and

WHEREAS, women - particularly women of color - are the most likely to live in poverty, are overrepresented in low-paying occupations, and are far more likely to lack access to sick leave and health care benefits; and

WHEREAS, Black women are paid 66 cents for every dollar that is paid to white men, andLatinas make even less at 58 cents for every dollar white men make; and

WHEREAS, we live in a time of pandemics and climate disruptions, and everyone deserves an income floor through a guaranteed income, which is a monthly, cash payment given directly to individuals. It is unconditional, with no strings attached and no work requirements. A guaranteed income is meant to supplement, rather than replace, the existing social safety net and can be a tool for racial and gender equity.

WHEREAS, a guaranteed income empowers recipients to address their most urgent needs and provides a cushion for unpredictable expenses, external shocks, and volatility; and

WHEREAS, as mayors, our problems may look different from town to town, but we are united in our duty to ensure the economic security of our residents through a guaranteed income.

Now, therefore, we resolve to work together to advance the following principles:

1. Advocate for a guaranteed income at the local, state, and federal level.

2. Invest in narrative change efforts to highlight the lived experiences of economic insecurity.

3. Invite other cities to join us in our efforts, and provide technical assistance and funding support for new pilots.
I am originally from Westhampton Beach, New York and I moved to Richmond in 1990 to attend school at Virginia Union University. I am an early intervention assistant for Richmond Public Schools, where I help tutor children below grade level to grow to grade level.

Before I began receiving payments through RRI, my financial situation was pretty bad. I had more bills than money coming in – regular, everyday life bills, like power, rent, groceries, cable, cell phone, car note. I went through plenty of sleepless nights wondering how I was going to make ends meet. I was losing weight and experiencing anxiety about the simple question of “how am I going to keep the lights on?”

Now that I have the guaranteed income support, I have been able to pay off medical bills that were outstanding. And I’m just $700 from paying my car off. The next goal is permanent housing – homeownership is my ultimate goal. I can see the finish line, and it feels so good.
Mayors for a Guaranteed Income

Mayors Leading the Way

1. Steve Adler
   Austin, TX

2. Thomas G. Ambrosina
   Chelsea, MA

3. Ras J. Baraka
   Newark, NJ

4. Tom Barrett
   Milwaukee, WI

5. Stephen K. Benjamin
   Columbia, SC

6. Daniel Blis
   Evanston, IL

7. Keisha Lance Bottoms
   Atlanta, GA

8. London Breed
   San Francisco, CA

9. Aja Brown
   New Orleans, LA

10. LaToya Cantrell
    New Orleans, LA

11. Melvin Carter
    Saint Paul, MN

12. Paul Deasy
    Flagstaff, AZ

13. Jenny Durkan
    Seattle, WA

14. Jorge O. Elorza
    Providence, RI

15. Benjamin Florsheim
    Middletown, CT

16. Jacob Frey
    Minneapolis, MN

17. Eric Garcetti
    Los Angeles, CA

18. Robert Garcia
    Long Beach, CA

19. Todd Gloria
    San Diego, CA

20. Michael B. Hancock
    Denver, CO

21. Don Hardy
    Kinston, NC

22. Rodney Harris
    Miami Gardens, FL

23. Sue Himmelrich
    Santa Monica, CA

24. Christy Holstege
    Palm Springs, CA

25. Lindsey P. Horvath
    West Hollywood, CA

26. Kamal Johnson
    Hudson, NY

27. Tishaura O. Jones
    Saint Louis, MO

28. Ellen Kamei
    Mountain View, CA

29. Jim Kenney
    Philadelphia, PA

30. Chokwe A. Lumumba
    Jackson, MS

31. Dianne Martinez
    Emeryville, CA

32. Lauren Meister
    West Hollywood, CA

33. Alex Morse
    Holyoke, MA

34. Svante Myrick
    Ithaca, NY

35. Ron Nirenberg
    San Antonio, TX

36. Bryan Osorio
    Delano, CA

37. Eric Papenfuse
    Harrisburg, PA

38. Shonyn Patterson-Howard
    Mount Vernon, NY

39. William Peduto
    Pittsburgh, PA

40. Adrian D. Perkins
    Shreveport, LA

41. Lauren Poe
    Gainesville, FL

42. Jerome A. Prince
    Gary, IN

43. Sasha Renée Pérez
    Alhambra, CA

44. Satya Rhodes-Conway
    Madison, WI

45. Katie Rosenberg
    Wausau, WI

46. Andre Sayegh
    Paterson, NJ

47. Libby Schaaf
    Oakland, CA

48. Steve Schewel
    Durham, NC

49. Brandon Scott
    Baltimore, MD

50. Sumbul Siddiqui
    Cambridge, MA

51. Alejandro Soló-Solís
    National City, CA

52. Darrell Steinberg
    Sacramento, CA

53. Kate Stewart
    Takoma Park, MD

54. Levar Stoney
    Richmond, VA

55. Edward A. Sundquist
    Jamestown, NY

56. Sylvester Turner
    Houston, TX

57. Lovely A. Warren
    Rochester, NY

58. Anne Watson
    Montpelier, VT

59. Alan Webber
    Santa Fe, NM

60. Justin Wilson
    Alexandria, VA

61. Patrick Wojahn
    College Park, MD

62. Victoria R. Woodards
    Tacoma, WA

Mayor Michael D. Tubbs
Founder/Chair, MGI
Stockton, CA

Pilot Cities
Represents

Emeryville, CA
Dianne Martinez

Palm Springs, CA
Christy Holstege

Santa Monica, CA
Sue Himmelrich

Kinston, NC
Don Hardy

Flagstaff, AZ
Paul Deasy

Long Beach, CA
Robert Garcia

San Diego, CA
Todd Gloria

Denver, CO
Michael B. Hancock

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Bryan Osorio

Harrisburg, PA
Eric Papenfuse

Mount Vernon, NY
William Peduto

Shreveport, LA
Adrian D. Perkins

Philadelphia, PA
Jim Kenney

Jackson, MS
Chokwe A. Lumumba

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Justin Wilson

Gainesville, FL
Lauren Poe

Rochester, NY
Lovely A. Warren

Charlotte, NC
Randall Woodfin

Richmond, VA
Levar Stoney

Chapel Hill, NC
Sylvester Turner

Alberta, CA
Sasha Renee Perez

Durham, NC
Brandon Scott

College Park, MD
Patrick Wojahn

Alexandria, VA
Justin Wilson

Randall Woodfin
The 15 pilots listed here have already started disbursements, and many more pilots are expected to launch in 2022. Research from all pilots, combined with narrative change and advocacy, will help us reach our North Star: a federal guaranteed income.

Join our movement at: mayorsforagi.org
Since launching, MGI has grown from

11 to 63 Mayors

Across 26 Different States

Representing 24 Million Americans

Between the pilots that have already started disbursements and those that are in the works, our coalition will provide more than

$100 MILLION

in direct, unconditional relief to everyday Americans.

Thank you to our Funders

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