Advancing Equity Through the American Rescue Plan

MAY 2022

Executive Summary

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

"Our country faces converging economic, health, and climate crises that have exposed and exacerbated inequities, while a historic movement for justice has highlighted the unbearable human costs of systemic racism. Our Nation deserves an ambitious whole-of-government equity agenda that matches the scale of the opportunities and challenges that we face."

- President Biden

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Preface

In March 2021, less than two months into his Administration, President Biden signed into law the landmark American Rescue Plan Act (ARP). ARP included historic funding to address the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and became a major opportunity to deliver on the President's commitment to advance equity through a concerted, whole-of-government approach.

We knew that the implementation of this historic piece of legislation would be one of the first tests of the President's *Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities*. That is why from day one the American Rescue Plan Implementation Team, charged with overseeing the distribution and implementation of $1.9 trillion in relief funds, has worked hand-in-hand with the Domestic Policy Council, which is charged with implementation of the Executive Order. This has occurred alongside work with our partners at Office of Management and Budget, the National Economic Council, Gender Policy Council, and other key teams at the White House.

Over the past year, the work of our teams, critical partners across the government, and external stakeholders has put ARP on track to deliver the most equitable recovery of any federal stimulus package in U.S. history. ARP drove the largest year of job growth on record, with record drops in unemployment for Black and Hispanic workers, as well as those entering the labor market or facing long-term unemployment. It reduced child poverty to the lowest levels on record in 2021 and kept millions of Americans in their homes.

As this report details, at every step of implementation the Biden-Harris Administration prioritized equitable delivery and has shown a willingness to respond to lessons learned and input from a broad set of stakeholders. This report underscores not only the breadth of work undertaken by federal agencies and external partners to ensure that the impact of the American Rescue Plan is being felt by those most in need but also the amount of work that still lies ahead. These pages lay an important foundation as we continue to work to ensure an effective and equitable recovery.

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Introduction

The Biden-Harris Administration is on track to deliver the most equitable recovery in U.S. history. This fact did not occur by chance. Rather, this achievement is the result of great care and attention to advancing equity through the design and the implementation of programs funded through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

On his first day in office President Biden signed *Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government (EO 13985).* This action represents the first time a president affirmatively directed a whole-of-government approach to prioritizing equitable access to, and implementation of, federal programs and services.

Federal agencies were tasked with assessing current practices and developing a plan to address the barriers that underserved communities and individuals may face in accessing federal programs, procurement, and contracting opportunities. More than just a directive to agency heads, this action marked the beginning of a new governing approach with a day one focus on implementation—one that heightens the federal government's responsibility to develop policies and programs that deliver resources and benefits that reach everyone, and to dismantle barriers that have created disparities in outcomes for people of color, rural and Tribal communities, and other underserved groups and communities in America.

On March 11, 2021, less than two months after signing EO 13985, President Biden signed into law the $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP). ARP included historic funding for over 200 programs and services designed to counteract the public health, economic, and broader societal harms of the COVID-19 pandemic and became the Administration's first opportunity to advance equity through the implementation of major legislation.

Major components of ARP were explicitly designed to respond to the disproportionate negative impacts of the pandemic on underserved communities. It included provisions and funding intended to both stem the impact of the pandemic while also strengthening and reimagining societal structures and institutions to help the nation build a more equitable society. These goals are represented in significant—at times historic—funding for existing programs, the creation of new equity-focused programs, the expansion of eligibility for critical programs, and the institution of new provisions that have guided the equitable allocation of resources.

And yet, while ARP holds the promise for an equitable recovery, implementation is critical to ensuring individuals and communities meaningfully experience the intended impact. Underscoring the importance of implementation on equitable access, when President Biden announced the appointment of his American Rescue Plan Coordinator four days after signing the bill into law, he emphasized that equity would be a key focus of implementation. Equity—along with integrity and efficiency—was defined as a core pillar of successful implementation, and is a demonstration of the Biden-Harris Administration's equitable governing approach.

"It's one thing to pass a historic piece of legislation like the American Rescue Plan, and it's quite another to implement it. And the devil is in the details. It requires fastidious oversight to make sure the relief arrives quickly, equitably, and efficiently with no waste or fraud in your bank account, in your mailbox, to the local business in your community and to your child's school."

– President Biden announcing the American Rescue Plan Coordinator

Equitable Implementation of the American Rescue Plan

This report, *Advancing Equity through the American Rescue Plan*, offers insight into how the Biden-Harris Administration has approached ensuring the equitable implementation of one of the most ambitious legislative packages in generations.[1] The report also provides a pathway for further actions toward ensuring federal programs and services advance equity and support for underserved communities.

Defining and Operationalizing Equity in Implementation

EO 13985 defines *equity* as "the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality."

EO 13985 further lays out several principles for equitable implementation of government programs and services, and directs agencies to undertake processes to understand whether its programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for underserved groups. This includes examining and addressing barriers to enrollment in and access to services, and to ensuring equitable allocation of resources, including through agency procurement and contracting opportunities. Moreover, EO 13985 requires that agencies engage with members of underserved communities to understand barriers and pain points to accessing government programs and services, and to address barriers that prevent data from being sufficiently disaggregated to measure equity outcomes.

With EO 13985 as the foundation, the Administration took additional early actions to underscore the importance of incorporating key equity principles and related considerations in ARP program design and implementation. This included the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issuing memoranda M-21-20 on *Promoting Public Trust in the Federal Government through Effective Implementation of the American Rescue Plan Act and Stewardship of the Taxpayer Resources* and M-21-24 on *Promoting Public Trust in the Federal Government and Effective Policy Implementation through Interagency Review and Coordination of the American Rescue Plan Act* to provide high-level direction for agencies to consider equity in ARP implementation.[2] M-21-20 directs agencies to consider ARP programs in their execution of EO 13985 and to sufficiently consider the impact of internal controls aimed at strengthening payment integrity on equitable

program access, including by working with the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC) and agency Inspector Generals. Agencies were also reminded, in the context of achieving equity-oriented results, that federal awarding agencies are required in 2 CFR part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, And Audit Requirements for Federal Awards,* to administer programs in a manner that promotes fair and equitable administration of financial assistance and to design programs with clear goals and objectives to facilitate meaningful results, given that, "Well-designed programs, with a focus on equity implications, represent a critical component of an agency's implementation strategies and will contribute to longer-term outcomes responsive to the current crisis."

To support agencies, and ensure accountability to equitable implementation, the ARP Implementation Coordinator appointed a Chief Data and Equity Officer, and developed an *equitable implementation framework* to assess progress and identify where additional effort was required throughout the implementation process. The framework, which synthesized EO 13895 principles and directions to agency heads through M-21-20 and M-21-24, included ensuring the following:

- **Goals:** Program goals and measurable targets are established, and programs track progress against these goals and targets.
- **Awareness & Access**: People are aware of and can easily access eligible programs and services, including underserved individuals and communities.
- **Allocating & Leveraging Resources**: Funds and other resources are allocated, leveraged and spent equitably.
- **Measuring Results**: Sufficient data is collected and analyzed to determine whether and how disparities change across key outcome measures, including for underserved populations.
- **Feedback**: Programs undergo regular internal review, including soliciting feedback from underserved individuals and communities for continuous improvements.
- **Evidence**: Programs are designed and implemented based on existing evidence of what works to advance equity, and data are collected and strategies are evaluated to build new evidence.

Executive Order 14020, Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council, and *Executive Order 14031, Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaaiians, and Pacific Islanders,* also serve as valuable guideposts for Biden-Harris Administration implementation efforts.

Taking Stock of Progress

ARP funded more than 200 programs and services in order to jumpstart a strong and equitable recovery and to ensure the recovery would be durable to overcome lingering impacts of the pandemic. In order to begin to take stock of progress, in fall 2021 the ARP Implementation Team used the equitable implementation framework to conduct a review of selected ARP programs to understand progress to-date, and identify areas where federal agencies were planning to do more to ensure all eligible populations and communities are able to equitably access key resources and programs.

This report builds on that first-of-its-kind review process, and describes how the Administration is working to advance equity through the lens of 32 case studies of ARP programs. Using the case studies, the report describes describe the primary rationale and pandemic-related societal challenges that the program was meant to address; overview key program elements, with a specific focus on those that might advance equitable access; describe efforts that the Administration has taken alongside key partners to address challenges and equitably implement the program; highlight key equity outcomes; and offer a look ahead at forthcoming reporting deadlines, upcoming requests for proposals, evaluation efforts, and other planned implementation actions.

The case studies included in this report represent a select range of ARP programs, including many of the large economic, health, nutrition, and educational programs that are uniquely positioned to advance equity through legislative design. In selecting the case studies, this report seeks to illustrate a range of policy areas and equitable implementation strategies, but it is not representative of all types of programs. Of the $1.9 trillion in ARP funding, the 32 case studies in this report represent approximately $850 billion in funding. Excluding the funds allocated for stimulus checks (also known as Economic Impact Payments) the programs in this report represent nearly 60 percent of ARP funding.

It should be noted that even those ARP programs not included as case studies in this report are also aimed at advancing equity. For example, ARP provided substantial investments in vaccination outreach to expand access and build public confidence, funded community health centers and rural providers to expand access to quality health care for our nation's hardest-to-reach individuals and communities, and invested in critical programs to ensure the safety and protection of older adults and to support children and families affected by the pandemic. ARP also provided states with a new financial incentive to expand their state Medicaid programs to hundreds of thousands of low-income individuals. All of these programs have been critical to bringing the country through many of the most difficult moments of the pandemic, and were all designed and implemented with equity as a core value.

Among the case studies included in this report, only a small number have completed to date. Many programs have allocated initial rounds of funding but have more work ahead, including on technical assistance, reporting, and engagement. In other cases, programs were designed to be at earlier stages in their deployment at the time of this report. Each case study offers a section entitled "The Road Ahead," which provides reflections on lessons-learned and describes key implementation activities still to be completed by the agency and grantees, including program reporting activities and future notice of funding opportunities. Where known, these sections also speak to future evaluations that the agency is considering to interrogate program outcomes across various populations.

The ARP Equity Learning Agenda

Evaluations, particularly when centered on questions that help illuminate the impacts of programs and related interventions on underserved communities, are a core component of equitable implementation. ARP is an ambitious package that funds a broad range of new innovations that are intended to advance equity and improve the lives of Americans. Understanding how well these programs achieve their goals and how various equity strategies support those goals is of critical importance. While some of those questions can be answered through thoughtful reporting and administrative data collection, it is also important to conduct

well-designed and rigorous evaluations and other evidence-building activities where possible. To this end, as a complement to the agency specific evaluation efforts, an ARP Equity Learning Agenda developed with agency partners is included as an appendix to this report.

The ARP Equity Learning Agenda is both intended to underscore the Administration's commitment to evidence-building as a core equity advancing activity, and to extend a call-to-action for non-federal actors to undertake complementary activities. These efforts will help further lay the foundation for future equitable policymaking and implementation efforts.

Achieving Equity Through a Whole-of-Community Effort

This report highlights the work that has taken place—including in partnership with civil society and the private sector—to advance equitable outcomes for all during the first year of ARP implementation. It offers reflections on lessons learned for future legislation and implementation efforts. The report is also a forward-looking document that highlights forthcoming actions and serves as a call for continued action by the broad range of federal and non-federal partners who are working to ensure resources get where they are intended and most needed. ARP has already delivered historic results in a short period of time, and it has set the country on a path for a durable and equitable recovery. This report marks those milestones and provides insight into the actions taken to advance equity, while outlining the work that lays ahead.

The American Rescue Plan's Equity Mission was Heightened by the Context of COVID-19

The imperative for the American Rescue Plan to be both designed and implemented with an equity focus was strongly enhanced by the impact that COVID-19 was having in exacerbating existing disparities within the United States. As President Biden took the oath of office on January 20, 2021, the U.S. stood at a critical moment in the pandemic. The country was ravaged by loss of life, illness, economic hardship, and the trauma associated with a complete disruption to the routines of the past. Yet, it was painfully apparent that even though we were all facing the same storm we were not all in the same boat.

The ravaging unequal effects of the pandemic meant that underserved groups were acutely exposed to the harms of the virus as well as its economic and social impacts. COVID-19 quickly proved to be a disease that not only attacked the body, but one that preyed on the systemic long-standing inequities in American society. From 2018 to the end of 2020, U.S. life expectancy decreased disproportionately among racial and ethnic minority groups—decreasing by 3.88 years for Hispanic populations, 2.35 years for non-Hispanic Black populations, and 1.36 years for non-Hispanic White populations.[3] It should also be noted that American Indian or Alaska Natives are 2.2 times more likely to die from COVID-19 compared to Whites, 3.2 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 1.5 times more likely to contract COVID-19.[4] New studies also reveal Asian Americans experience significantly higher excess all-cause mortality (3.1 times higher), case fatality rates (as high as 53 percent higher), and percentage of deaths attributed to COVID-19 (2.1 times higher) compared to non-Hispanic Whites.[5]

A 2021 National Institutes of Health study highlighted disparities in COVID-19 associated deaths for the many children in the United States under the age of 18 who lost a parent, custodial grandparent or grandparent caregiver who provided the child's home, basic needs, and daily

care.[6] Of the 120,630 children who are estimated to have experienced the death of a primary caregiver, 65 percent were children of racial and ethnic minorities.[7]

A review of income and death data from over 3,200 U.S. counties showed that Americans living in counties with the lowest median income died during the pandemic at almost two times the rate of those living in counties with the highest median income.[8] This gap was further exacerbated during the Delta variant wave—during that period, people living in counties with the lowest median income died at five times the rate of those living in counties with the highest median income.[9]

While the pandemic affected communities across the country, it has exacerbated pernicious inequities along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines. Disparate impacts are also apparent when examining outcomes by gender, foreign-born status, income, disability status, sexual orientation, geography, and more. Additional examples include the following:

- **Employment:** Workers experienced historic unemployment during the COVID-19 pandemic, with rates above 14 percent for all workers and as high as 18.5 percent in April 2020 for Hispanic workers and 16.7 percent for Black workers in May 2020.[10] Women were disproportionately burdened, as they bore the brunt of COVID-19 school and childcare closures as well as additional care responsibilities. For mothers of young children, labor market recovery remains depressed even two years into the pandemic.[11]
    - 80 percent of job loss occurred among the lowest quarter of wage earners and workers with the lowest wages and hours, and Black and Hispanic women, and Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders in particular experienced disproportionate losses.[12]
    - The pandemic led to rural unemployment rates at levels not seen since the Great Depression in the 1930s, peaking in April 2020 at 13.6 percent in rural areas—with the unemployment rate more than doubling in persistently poor rural counties compared to rural counties that were not persistently poor.[13]
- **Housing:** In January of 2021, 15 million people (one in five adult renters) reported to the Census Bureau that their household was behind on rent.[14] Renters of color and families with children consistently reported higher rates of hardship in paying their rent throughout 2020 and 2021.[15] In March 2021, 22 percent of Black and 20 percent of Hispanic renters could not pay the prior month's rent on time, an indication of potential future eviction. In contrast, nine percent of White renters said they could not.[16] Even before the pandemic, 30 percent of rural households struggle with at least one major housing problem, such as physical deficiencies, high costs, or overcrowding in homes.[17] Forty-seven percent of rural renters pay more than 30 percent of their income on housing and nearly half of rural renters pay more than 50 percent of their income on housing.[18]
- **Education:** High-poverty school districts and districts serving students mostly of color, and lower achieving districts were more likely than their respective counterparts to indicate that daily attendance in fall 2020 was substantially lower than in the previous year.[19] Black and Hispanic students were more likely to remain remote through late 2020 than White students, with about 70 percent of Black students still remote compared with 49 percent of White students, and less likely to have what they needed to learn effectively (e.g., devices and internet access).[20]

- When schools and early education providers closed during the initial months of the pandemic, many children with disabilities and their families lost vital, specialized services. Initial reports suggest that children with disabilities have faced significant regression due to lack of services and inaccessible technology.[21]
- Only an estimated 64 percent of households in nonmetro areas with persistent poverty had access to home internet with a subscription.[22]

- **Small Business:** An estimated 41 percent of Black-owned businesses closed from February to April 2020, while the overall decline was closer to half that, at 22 percent.[23] The total number of people who were self-employed and working declined by 20.2 percent between April 2019 and April 2020—with the highest declines experienced by the Asian (37.1 percent) and Black (37.6) communities.[24] Small businesses provide 35 percent of employment in rural towns, compared to 27 percent in urban areas.[25] Small business and rural economies were particularly hard hit during the pandemic—tourism, manufacturing, natural resource production, and transportation make up 56 percent of jobs in rural communities—and were amongst the industries most impacted by COVID-19.[26]
- **Substance Abuse:** More than 104,000 Americans died due to a drug overdose in the 12-month period ending in September 2021—a record high.[27] Researchers at the University of California, Los Angeles, analyzed emergency medical calls nationwide and found an overall increase of 42 percent in overdose deaths in 2020.[28] The largest increase was for Black people, with a spike of more than 50 percent.[29]
- **Mental Health:** According to the CDC, survey data from June 2020 showed that in the early days of the pandemic, respondents who reported having seriously considered suicide in the 30 days before completing the survey (10.7 percent) was significantly higher among Hispanic respondents (18.6 percent), Black respondents (15.1 percent), self-reported unpaid caregivers for adults (30.7 percent), and essential workers (21.7 percent).[30]
- **Hate Crimes:** Racism and xenophobia gave rise to a dramatic increase in violence against the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander community. The FBI reported that hate crimes against people of Asian descent rose by 76 percent in 2020.[31]

One Year Out: ARP Has Led to the Most Equitable Economic Recovery with the Least Economic Scarring in Memory

ARP is on track to deliver the most equitable recovery of any federal stimulus package in U.S. history. In its first year, we see indications that ARP is providing much needed relief and is *making significant progress toward advancing equitable outcomes.* The impact of these relatively fast economic recovery gains also points to long-term benefits. For example, research has found that unemployment, both short- and long-term, can lead to poorer physical and emotional health outcomes and higher suicide rates when compared to those who have stable employment.[32] In addition, the lingering effects of a prolonged weak labor market have

demonstrated to be particularly significant and lasting for workers of color and those without a high school degree.[33]

- **A Historic Jobs Recovery for All Workers:** The American Rescue Plan powered the *largest calendar year jobs growth on record*—resulting in unemployment down to 3.6 percent as of April 2022.
- **Hispanic Unemployment:** Hispanic unemployment fell by 4.5 points in 2021 to 4.9 percent—the *largest calendar year drop* on record – and has fallen further to 4.1 percent in April, *below pre-pandemic levels.*
- **Black Unemployment:** The U.S. experienced the fastest calendar year of decline in the number of unemployed Black workers on record and largest calendar year drop in unemployment since 1983 (with a 2.9-point drop in 2021)—now down to 5.9 percent in April, below pre-pandemic levels.
- **Youth Unemployment:** Youth employment among 16-24 year-olds is down to 7.9 percent, roughly at pre-pandemic levels, after the *largest calendar year drop on record* in 2021.
- **Long-term Unemployment:** Long-term unemployment fell by 2.8 million in the 12 months after the American Rescue Plan passed – *the largest 12-month drop on record*.
- **Unemployment in Rural Counties with Persistent Poverty:** Unemployment in rural counties with persistent poverty spiked in 2020 and remained above 6 percent through summer 2021—but by fall 2021, it fell to 4.2 percent—well below pre-pandemic levels.[34]
- **Child Poverty Reduced to the Lowest Levels on Record:** Experts estimate that child poverty *fell to its lowest rate on record in 2021*—with record low Black, Hispanic, and White child poverty in 2021.[35]
- **Housing Stability:** Over the five months after the end of the eviction moratorium, eviction filings remained at *about 60 percent of historical averages.*[36] Meanwhile, foreclosures reached record lows in 2021—at just 151,000 homes in foreclosure, *less than a third of pre-pandemic levels.*[37]
- **Credit Card Delinquencies**: In the second and third quarters of 2021, the share of borrowers behind on their credit card bills by over 30 days fell to *record lows* instead of spiking as in past recessions.[38]

Lessons-Learned and The Road Ahead

The American Rescue Plan was one of the most ambitious pieces of legislation signed into law in American history. The legislation was intended to not only address the very immediate threats of the pandemic but also to build a more equitable society over the long run. Knowing that how the policy was implemented would determine whether existing economic and public health disparities would worsen or begin to be addressed, the President called for equity to be a core pillar of implementation. This specific charge, in the context of whole-of-government efforts to respond to EO 13895 was unprecedented. Agencies were directed to execute critical legislation in ways that advance equity, while simultaneously assessing their capabilities to do so in the moment, and beginning to build processes and capacity to more effectively do so in the future.[39]

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Through these efforts, the Administration has laid a foundation for future implementation efforts, including work now underway to implement the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Alongside setting a foundation for on-going implementation efforts, ARP has also illuminated several areas that could be critical for supporting future equitable implementation efforts, including:

- Dedicated funding in cases where access to services is historically constrained, rather than first-come, first-served funding;
- Flexible funding to support outreach, navigators, and plain language communications (including in multiple languages) to raise awareness and bridge the "last mile" to those who are eligible but have historically not been equitably served by federal programs;
- Provisions that require community engagement, consultation, and transparency to allow for greater participation and feedback across a diverse range of experiences;
- Funding for technology and human-centered design approaches that eliminate or reduce the administrative burden for eligible program participants;
- Increased and flexible funding for evidence-building and evaluation activities as well as regular reporting to understand program impact and whether or not interventions are having the intended effect on equitable outcomes;
- Inclusion of equity and accessibility metrics, alongside program fraud and integrity metrics; and
- Provisions, such as *maintenance of equity*, that preserve funding for areas vulnerable to programmatic cuts based on need.

Lastly, strong partnerships and open dialogue with state, local, Tribal, and territorial officials as well as private sector, academic, and civil society organizations can help surface early issues in implementation, raise awareness of critical programs among key populations, aid the design of tools and supports to spur increased access and enrollment, and gather more real-time and granular data about conditions on the ground than is otherwise possible. Future efforts should encourage robust engagement with external partners, and consider how to use to the tools of the federal government to spur a broad-based effort to ensure equitable outcomes.

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Executive Summary: Advancing Equity through American Rescue Plan Programs

This Executive Summary provides key highlights across the 32 programs featured in the report. It is structured across five thematic areas that underscore ARP's reach and ambition for supporting communities, families, businesses, and workers; and for providing a stronger safety net and more resilient and equitable economy and public health sector than what existed prior to the pandemic.

Lowering Barriers to Work and Providing Security for Working Families highlights programs that make investments directly in individuals and families, including providing enhanced tax credits and expanded eligibility, and in the case of the Child Tax Credit, making it advanceable on a monthly basis for the first time ever. These programs, along with Economic Impact Payments, provided families and individuals with some breathing room and space to get back on their feet when faced with the financial shocks and uncertainty presented by COVID-19. This was particularly true for the FEMA Funeral Assistance Program, a first-ever attempt to provide relief funding for a national disaster, supporting those of all incomes who lost loved ones due to COVID-19.

Similarly, initial reliance on the unemployment insurance (UI) system was fraught for many at the beginning of the pandemic, revealing a patchwork infrastructure that was severely strained at the height of the pandemic-induced unemployment. ARP invests in modernizing UI, including ensuring that equity is a core consideration of design and performance in the future.

ARP also made significant investments to ensure that families have quality, dependable, and affordable child care to rely on. Through stabilization grants for providers and increased subsidizes for low-income families, the Biden-Harris Administration is working closely with state partners to ensure that all parents have the option to go back to work and know their kids will be cared for in safe and nurturing environments.

Ensuring an Equitable Recovery for All Communities and Small Businesses underscores the impact of the pandemic on families and individuals through the toll that it took on the communities where they live and the businesses where they work and rely on for services and products. Not only has ARP made significant investments in communities and businesses, but the Biden-Harris Administration has worked tirelessly to reverse the inequities of the early pandemic response, and ensure that all businesses and all communities have a fair shot at accessing resources, and are able to build back in the ways that are responsive to their individual needs. This included administering historic funding to state, local, and Tribal governments and developing guidance that helped communities address existing disparities.

A significant suite of programs was targeted toward supporting a wide-range of businesses and organizations, including small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, arts and culture organizations, and businesses that are the core of rural economies. ARP also created the first ever Small Business Community Navigator program, an effort to ensure awareness of, and access to, critical programs for those businesses that are underserved by federal and private programs.

Securing Dignified Housing and Living Conditions examines the implementation of programs that recognize that the home is a foundation for individuals and families, and a cornerstone for dignity and better health, economic, and educational outcomes. The Biden-Harris Administration has made it a priority of its ARP implementation efforts to ensure that historic housing resources are reaching those who are most in need as eviction, foreclosure, and utility shutoff moratoriums across the country have expired or are expiring. From establishing the Nation's first-ever infrastructure for eviction prevention and water assistance, to making substantial investments in the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and increasing the supply of housing vouchers, ARP was designed to provide robust and timely resources for individuals on the precipice of losing housing.

Investing in Equity and Opportunity for our Children and Young Adults walks through efforts that the Biden-Harris Administration has taken to get children back to school as quickly and safely as possible. Understanding the impact of lost instructional time or having to unenroll from an institution of higher education (IHE) on learning and economic opportunity outcomes, the Administration's implementation efforts have focused on working with state and local education agencies and IHEs to support their efforts to get students back to school and provide necessary supports that can accommodate not only each school's unique needs, but each child's or young adult's unique needs as well. ARP not only provided significant new funding for existing pandemic education response programs, but took new steps, such as launching a first-of-its kind summer feeding program to ensure that millions of children do not go hungry when school is out of session, and instituting the first-ever Maintenance of Equity provision for state and local school districts receiving federal funding to make sure that resources are reaching those most in need.

Closing Health Disparities highlights a subset of ARP programs designed to address existing health disparities. While a significant portion of ARP was aimed directly at supporting the public health response to COVID-19, including increased testing and vaccine manufacturing and distribution, ARP also provided funding to support programs and services that help scaffold additional public health infrastructure. Most notably, this included funding to significantly reduce the cost of health insurance and increase enrollment for individuals with low-income. Several investments, including WIC Modernization and increases in postpartum coverage, support evidenced-based programs to improve health outcomes and decrease disparities across race and socio-economic status for new mothers. Similarly, investments in expanding the reach and capacity of home and community-based services and mobile crisis response systems are designed to help ensure underserved populations are able to access critical resources.

Lowering Barriers to Work and Providing Security for Working Families

Enhancements of the Child Tax Credit (Section 9611)

For tax year 2021, ARP increased the maximum Child Tax Credit (CTC) payment to historic levels—from $2,000 to $3,000 per qualifying child age six to 17 and $3,600 per qualifying child under age six—while making the parents or guardians of 17-year-old children newly eligible. Additionally, ARP ensures that all eligible families in need will qualify for the full 2021 credit, benefiting the families of more than 26 million children, including half of Black and Hispanic children whose families did not owe enough in taxes to qualify for the full credit in the previous year. Finally, for the first time ever, ARP allowed families to receive half of the estimated benefit in advance as monthly payments in the second half of 2021.

Early indications are that the expansions of the CTC had a historic impact on child poverty in communities across the country. A Columbia University Center on Poverty and Social Policy study looking at monthly poverty reduction found that advanced CTC payments kept more than two million Black and Latino children out of poverty in December 2021.[40] The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that 94 percent of children who live in rural areas will benefit from this expansion of the CTC.[41] When combined with the second half of the CTC that most families will receive with this year's tax return, researchers project that the CTC will have been the leading factor in driving the child poverty rate to its lowest level on record in 2021—and result in record low Hispanic and Black child poverty rates.[42]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Automatic Payments to Families with Low Income:** In the spring of 2021, in consultation with the White House ARP Implementation Team and the Office of Tax Policy at Treasury, the IRS made a policy decision to use information from those who submitted information in 2020 to receive Economic Impact Payments ("stimulus checks") to identify families who would likely be eligible for the CTC in 2021 and provide them advance monthly payments automatically. As a result, families presumed to be infrequent or unlikely tax filers, and representing approximately 729,000 children, were able to benefit from monthly payments without having to complete additional steps.
- **Providing Simple Tools to Help Families Access CTC Benefits:** Treasury published guidance providing simplified tax return filing procedures to help families more easily claim eligible benefits. Following the guidance, in June 2021 IRS launched the first-ever dedicated, simplified filing tool for the child tax credit ("CTC non-filer tool") to help families with incomes below the tax filing threshold more easily file a return and sign-up for CTC benefits. In August 2021 in response to concerns that the CTC non-filer tool was not accessible enough, the Administration partnered with Code for America, a technology nonprofit, to launch GetCTC.org, a more user-friendly filing tool that was both mobile-friendly and included Spanish translation.
- **Launching ChildTaxCredit.gov:** In June 2021, the Administration launched ChildTaxCredit.gov as a friendly, plain language, multilingual, one-stop for people who

needed information on the CTC and help connecting to assistance in signing up for benefits. Childtaxcredit.gov has been updated and is being used to also help families access full-filing, as well as offering special pages on access to filing in Puerto Rico and getting the Child Care and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

- **Leveraging an All-of-Government Approach to Raise CTC Awareness and Access, and Aiding Non-Profit Efforts to Expand Reach:** The White House has called on agencies across the federal government to raise awareness of CTC and support families in accessing both advanced monthly payments in 2021 and their full benefit during the 2021 filing season in 2022. Numerous agency actions followed, including:
    - Treasury conducted more than 45 navigator trainings for agency and non-profit partners reaching over 6,000 individuals in order to educate and enroll families in CTC.
    - IRS sent over 2 million letters to potentially eligible families that had not yet completed 2019 or 2020 tax returns. IRS also hosted free tax preparation days in nearly 30 cities across the country in June and July 2021.
    - The Social Security Administration launched a highly successful marketing campaign to inform low-income individuals how to claim the advance CTC payments.
    - AmeriCorps members supported CTC navigation at Head Start centers in 16 cities with lower-than expected CTC receipt.
    - The White House also launched a 16-city government working group to test and learn effective strategies for reaching and enrolling families in CTC.
    - In February 2022, the Administration—led by Vice President Harris, Secretary of Treasury, and WH ARP Implementation Coordinator—hosted a Day of Action with events in all 50 states to encourage sign-ups and help connect families to benefits.

The Earned Income Tax Credit for Workers without Dependent Children (Section 9621)

ARP expanded eligibility and nearly tripled the Earned Income Tax Cred (EITC) for workers without dependent children, from about $540 to about $1500 for tax year 2021. For the first time, the EITC is available to many workers without dependent children who are as young as 19, and now has no age limit cap—previously only workers ages 25 to 64 could claim the credit for workers without dependent children. For former foster youth and homeless youth, eligibility begins at age 18 for the 2021 credit.

Thanks to ARP's expansion of the credit, experts estimate that 17 million lower income workers without dependent children could benefit from the 2021 credit—including about 2.7 million rural workers.[43] Low income workers projected to benefit from the expansion in 2021 are disproportionately Black (18 percent) and Latino (26 percent).[44] The EITC expansion is also expected to disproportionately help front-line workers, including over 3 million people across cashiers, cooks and food prep workers, nurses and health aides, and child care workers.[45]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **CTC/EITC Day with Vice President Harris and Secretary Yellen:** On February 8, 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen led a CTC/EITC Day of Action, which drove hundreds of government, non-profit, and philanthropic commitments to help Americans file their taxes to claim the EITC and CTC.
- **Mobilizing Outreach and Tax Filing Assistance Across the Country:** With more tax benefits available to low-income workers for tax year 2021, the White House and Treasury are coordinating outreach across both CTC and EITC in partnership with agencies, state and local governments, and non-profit partners. This includes:
    - Elevating EITC through the IRS-supported Volunteers Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) sites as an important benefit.
    - On the week of the one-year anniversary of ARP, the White House ARP Implementation Team released a nationwide state-by-state account of the number of workers who would be eligible for the expanded EITC in a major press call with Senator Cory Booker.
    - Continuing to engage with national community-based organizations to elevate free online tax preparation services; and agency actions such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development's efforts to mobilize on-the-ground staff and stakeholders to help HUD-assisted households file taxes.
    - In January 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration launched a revamped ChildTaxCredit.gov as a plain-language, multi-lingual resource with a dedicated EITC section in order to help Americans get information and find trusted, free assistance in filing taxes—including for workers without dependent children eligible for the expanded benefit.

Permanent Expansion of Tax Relief to Puerto Rico Families

ARP made permanent changes to tax benefits for Puerto Rico families, including: 1) lifting previous restrictions that prevented families in Puerto Rico with fewer than three children from claiming the federal CTC, and 2) providing up to roughly $600 million annually in matching funds to bolster Puerto Rico's locally administered EITC—resulting in an expected quadrupling of EITC benefits provided starting in the 2021 tax year. Together, these permanent changes are expected to provide over $1 billion in additional tax relief to families in Puerto Rico on an annual basis.[46]

Before ARP, families in Puerto Rico with fewer than three qualifying children were ineligible to claim *any* federal Child Tax Credit benefits—excluding nearly 90 percent of all families in the territory.[47] Similarly, before ARP, the federal government had never provided support for an EITC in Puerto Rico. ARP changed this unequal treatment—making families in Puerto Rico eligible for CTC benefits on the same basis as residents of the mainland permanently and allowing families with two or fewer children to claim the CTC *for the first time*. Thanks to the changes included in ARP, a low-income family in Puerto Rico with two children under age six could be eligible for EITC and CTC benefits of up to $11,200 for the 2021 tax year.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Meeting Early with Puerto Rican Government Leaders on Strategies for CTC Outreach**: The American Rescue Plan Coordinator, Treasury Officials, and White House Intergovernmental Affairs hosted multiple discussions with the Governor of Puerto Rico, as well as several meetings at the White House with key mayors and legislative leaders on CTC outreach strategies for Puerto Rico.
- **Coordinating Efforts to Ensure a Comprehensive and Streamlined Public Campaign for CTC and EITC Awareness:** The White House appointed a senior advisor dedicated to the implementation of the Child Tax Credit in Puerto Rico who worked to coordinate awareness and filing efforts with key governments and non-profits in Puerto Rico. The White House ARP Implementation Team and Treasury Department—in collaboration with UnidosUS—created and coordinated a CTC/EITC Puerto Rico Working Group that included the Youth Development Institute (IDJ), Espacios Abiertos, Hispanic Federation, United Way and others. This working group met weekly with the American Rescue Plan Coordinator, Treasury and IRS, and Puerto Rico tax officials, and helped spot implementation challenges on the ground and raise them with relevant government officials. The group also helped increase awareness and take up rates among newly eligible families in Puerto Rico. Collaboration across these groups has already led to over 35 local community events, navigator trainings, and capacity building engagements for local elected officials and municipal staff.
- **Ensuring Capacity for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Centers and Facilitated Self-Assistance (FSA) Sites:** This also includes ensuring capacity for navigator training and volunteer recruitment scale-up for tax prep assistance in low income communities. Currently there are 43 tax assistance sites, including VITA and FSA in the island.
- **In Partnership with Governor Pierluisi, Developing Training and Capacity Building Events for Municipal Staff as well as State and Local Government Service Providers:** These training and capacity building events include navigator training, tax filing assistance training, hands-on demonstrations on free tax filer tools in collaboration with key local stakeholders like UnidosUS, United Way PR, Youth Development Institute (IDJ), Espacios Abiertos as well as IRS locally. More than 240 municipal and state agencies employees attended the in-person training, hosted by Fortaleza (Governor's Office).
- **Creation of a Free, Simplified Portal for Claiming the Child Tax Credit in Puerto Rico:** In May 2022, Treasury published guidance providing for simplified tax return filing procedures for residents of Puerto Rico claiming the Child Tax Credit for 2021. Code for America has committed to accommodating Puerto Rico families through their simplified filing tool, GetCTC.org, later in 2022.

Child Care Stabilization (Section 2202)

ARP provided unprecedented support for the child care industry at a time of crisis, establishing a new, time-limited Child Care Stabilization program to help ensure providers could keep their doors open through the pandemic's public health and economic disruptions. The stabilization program provides $24 billion for grants to states, territories, and Tribes to help child care

providers afford the costs of remaining open and operating, supporting millions of families and a stronger, more equitable economic recovery.

The Child Care Stabilization grant program was a historic expansion of aid for child care in both size and design. The legislation made any child care provider operating during the pandemic or temporarily closed due to COVID-19 potentially eligible for stabilization grants, so long as they were 1) eligible to participate in the subsidized child care program or 2) licensed, regulated, or registered and meeting state health and safety requirements at the time of ARP's passage. By mid-May 2022, stabilization payments had already reached more than 180,000 child care programs with a capacity to serve more than 8 million children.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Ensuring Funds Were Distributed to the Smallest Providers and Those Serving Underserved Populations:** The Administration instructed Lead Agencies to serve underserved constituencies, and required states to report on the demographics of providers they served.[48] As a result, several states used the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) to support equitable distribution of funds to child care providers that serve communities most in need in their states. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) encouraged states to provide information in plain language and in multiple languages and called on states to ensure they had available staff to translate documents received from providers in different languages. HHS also encouraged efforts to customize applications to support diverse communities in states and territories in order to help reduce disparities and advance racial equity within the child care system.[49] HHS published resources and videos on business practices and budgeting, and hosted webinars to help smaller child care providers, including family child care providers maximize the impact of federal funds.
- **Helping States Maximize the Number of Providers Who Receive Assistance:** The Administration encouraged the effective use of states' administrative funds to increase the reach of stabilization grant programs and support providers receiving funds, including through the May 2021 release of a packet of "Application Tips, Considerations, and Sample Forms" to encourage simple, easy, and accessible program design. To make it easier for providers to access stabilization grants, HHS published a web page with links to state applications, and provided resources to assist providers, including hosting national webinars for child care providers about the availability of stabilization grants.[50] HHS also encouraged states to reach more providers by funding and partnering with trusted organizations including professional organizations, family child care networks, unions, and child care resource and referral agencies.

Unemployment Insurance (Section 9032)

ARP provides $2 billion to the Department of Labor (DOL) to promote equitable access; detect and prevent fraud; and ensure the timely payment of benefits within the Unemployment Insurance (UI) system. These funds are provided in addition to funding for unemployment compensation benefits and the administration of unemployment compensation programs. The underlying challenge for DOL is how to both prevent fraud, including the types of fraud seen at the onset of the pandemic, while addressing long-standing equity, fraud, and payment timeliness

challenges in partnership with the 53 states and territories that administer UI benefits through their own individual systems. Informed by feedback from multiple rounds of stakeholder engagement with State Workforce Agencies, the National Association of State Workforce Agencies, advocates, and State UI representatives, DOL is working to address these persistent challenges.

DOL has allocated $615 million in ARP funds to immediately help states begin addressing these challenges through a series of grants and projects. In addition, the Administration is committed to creating a framework for a more resilient and equitable Unemployment Insurance system for the long term.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Issuing Grants to Strengthen States' Fraud Prevention and Detection Capacities, While Ensuring Equitable Access:** Using pandemic relief funds, including ARP, DOL awarded $211.2 million in grant funds to 58 states and territories to aid in the detection and prevention of fraud. As part of the grantmaking process, DOL specifically instructed states that as they "consider additional tools to incorporate into their fraud management operations, equitable access to unemployment benefits must be at the forefront of the decision-making process."[51]
- **Supporting State Efforts to Advance Equity Through an Innovative Equity Grant Program:** DOL will provide up to $260 million in grants to states to carry out activities that promote equitable access to UI programs, which include eliminating administrative barriers to benefit applications, reducing state workload backlogs, improving the timeliness of UI payments to eligible individuals, and ensuring equity in fraud prevention, detection, and recovery activities. DOL has announced $56 million to 12 state grantees thus far, of the 49 that applied by the December 31st deadline. These grants are innovative in requiring states to specify the metrics used to measure improvement for the underserved populations they have identified.
- **Deploying Teams of Experts into 18 States to Help Identify Process Improvements:** Under the "Tiger Team" project, DOL has deployed teams of experts into 18 states on a voluntary basis to help identify process improvements. Equity efforts include helping all claimants in underserved communities, standardizing and expanding translation services, simplifying communications, expanding mobile and offline access for workers who have limited internet access, and building partnerships with community-based organizations to assist claimants in successfully applying for their benefits. DOL has allocated $200 million to fund state implementation of Tiger Team recommendations.
- **Helping Workers Access UI Benefits Through a Pilot Navigator Program:** DOL is directing up to $15 million in ARP funds to pilot a new Navigator program in five states, announced in January 2022.[52] The purpose of the UI Navigators program is to help underserved workers learn about, apply for and, if eligible, receive unemployment insurance benefits and related services, as well as to support state agencies in delivering timely benefits to workers. Thirteen states applied for these competitive grants by the March 31, 2022 deadline, and they are currently being paneled for an award announcement this summer.

- **Creating Equity Indicators Through State UI Data Partnerships:** DOL is launching a series of pilot state data partnerships to help states develop high-quality, consistent indicators of access to the UI program—such as through application rates, recipiency rates, denials rates, and timeliness measures—disaggregated by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, occupation, industry, and education. Currently, five states have expressed interest in participating in the initial cohort of data partnerships and they are negotiating data sharing agreements with the Department.

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance (Section 4006)

COVID-19 Funeral Assistance provides financial assistance for COVID-19 related funeral expenses incurred on or after January 20, 2020 and is available in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and five territories. It was initiated under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act of 2021 with 100 percent federal cost share. Congress increased available funding under ARP. There are no income restrictions on who can apply for financial relief, and the program is fully funded by the federal government and currently there is no deadline for applications.

FEMA's nationwide COVID-19 Funeral Assistance is the first-of-its-kind. The program was launched in April 2021 and as of April 25, 2022, more than 343,000 applicants have received payment, totaling over $2.2 billion, with up to $9,000 in funeral assistance per decedent. In the decade preceding COVID-19, FEMA processed around 6,000 funeral assistance applications through its normal disaster programs.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Ensuring Awareness and Access for Eligible Individuals:** FEMA has taken many steps to raise awareness of this program and reduce barriers to application submission. This has included investing in language accessibility and translation services for public-facing products, and establishing partnerships and engaging in outreach with trusted community voices such as Tribal leaders and associations of funeral homes (including African American funeral directors and morticians) to raise awareness of the program. FEMA has also worked to streamline its application and provide documentation flexibility, including responding to concerns that many individuals who passed away early in the pandemic did not have "COVID-19" listed as the official cause of death, making friends and family members ineligible for assistance. To remedy that gap, FEMA now allows applicants to submit, in place of the death certificate, an official letter certifying a COVID-related death in certain instances.
- **Focusing on Proactive Outreach to Get Applications Over the Finish Line:** FEMA has conducted proactive outreach to applicants with incomplete applications to help them make corrections and receive full payment, including over 64,000 outreach calls and over 285,000 letters to applicants. Over 124,000 of these applicants subsequently submitted the documents and received assistance. FEMA also extended documentation submission timelines from 90 days to 365 days.
- **Conducting Data Monitoring and Soliciting Feedback for Continuous Program Improvements:** Beginning May 2021, FEMA began conducting a regular equity review of applications to monitor performance, potential service gaps, and to determine areas

that could benefit from increased outreach. FEMA also solicits participant feedback on barriers to accessing funeral assistance.

- **Continuing Communications and Outreach to Increase Awareness:** In December 2021, FEMA awarded a national media contract to raise awareness among communities with lower-than-average application rates.

Ensuring an Equitable Recovery for All Communities and Small Businesses

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Section 9901)

ARP provides $350 billion in historic financial assistance to over 30,000 state, local, and Tribal governments to fight the pandemic, support families and businesses struggling with its economic impacts, maintain vital public services despite revenue losses, and make investments that build a stronger, more equitable economy in the pandemic's wake. The State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) is an unprecedented commitment to helping local communities drive an equitable and durable economic recovery for all their residents, providing direct relief to local governments, including small or rural governments excluded from prior relief programs.

The Administration has worked from day one to craft the SLFRF program in a way that encourages governments to intentionally use funds to support a truly equitable recovery and address health and economic disparities, exacerbated by the pandemic, in the most underserved communities. Early reporting shows promising outcomes on how SLFRF is being used to advance equity, including investments in affordable housing, quality education, and public health that will help to reduce the health, economic, and educational disparities that left underserved communities more vulnerable to COVID-19 at the onset of the pandemic.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Empowering Recipients to Use Funds to Address Pre-Existing Disparities Exacerbated by the Pandemic, by Structuring the Program to Make it as Easy as Possible for State, Local, and Tribal Governments to Serve Families and Communities Hardest Hit By the Pandemic:** The Administration recognized that fully addressing the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic requires addressing underlying disparities that left some people and communities more vulnerable to the pandemic, not just the incremental impacts that occurred during the pandemic. To translate this goal into action, Treasury provided a broad menu of services to enhance health and economic equity that were automatically eligible uses of funds in low-income and high-poverty communities from urban to rural across the country.
- **Strongly Encouraging State, Local, and Tribal Governments to Use Funds to Advance Equity:** Treasury is encouraging governments to engage with their community to develop spending plans and requires large governments to publicly articulate how their use of SLFRF funds addresses inequities. Publicizing this information both encourages governments to engage with the community when developing their spending plans and helps constituents understand how their government plans to use funds and hold them accountable for those decisions. As governments crafted their spending plans, Treasury also shared equity best practices with funding recipients to further encourage uses of funds that advance equity.
- **Developing a Robust Reporting Regime to Provide Transparency and Accountability for How Governments Choose to Use Funds, as well as Driving Continual Improvement in this Program and Future Policymaking:** SLFRF reporting collects information about populations that are being served by a project to respond to the

pandemic's health and economic impacts, as well as project descriptions detailing the goals and desired impacts of the investment.[53]

- **Providing Support for Tribal Governments Through Ongoing Government-To-Government Direct Engagement:** This engagement supports Tribal governments so they can implement programs under the SLFRF that focus on maximizing the impact of their funds. ARP allocated $32 billion to Tribal governments, including $20 billion in SLFRF—a historic financial level of support for over 580 Tribal governments and the largest amount of funding to Tribal governments in ARP. In implementing this component of the program, Treasury has prioritized Tribal consultation and other engagement with Tribal governments. This feedback created meaningful changes to the program for Tribal governments, including Tribe-specific flexibilities in uses of funds for key priorities as well as streamlined reporting requirements for small Tribes.

State Small Business Credit Initiative (Section 3301)

ARP provides $10 billion to the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) program to support state, territory, and Tribal government small business credit and investment programs across the decade. The funding—more than 6.5 times larger than the allocation provided for the original SSBCI program in 2010—will support credit and investment programs for existing small businesses and start-ups, as well as assistance to businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals who are attempting to access capital.

SSBCI is expected to leverage $100 billion in capital for small businesses with dedicated funding to ensure equitable access, including $2.5 billion to support very small businesses, Tribal governments, and business enterprises owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (SEDI-owned businesses) and $1 billion in incentive funds for jurisdictions that demonstrate robust support for such businesses.[54] To date, Treasury has received capital program applications for SSBCI funding from all states, territories, and the District of Columbia, covering over 200 unique financing programs.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Issuing Program Guidance that Promotes Equity and Access:** Treasury issued guidance on the SSBCI program design and implementation in November 2021, after incorporating public feedback from a Request for Information—including 95 comments. The program guidance requires eligible grantees to describe in their application how the SSBCI funding will result in new lending and investment for small businesses and start-ups that would otherwise lack opportunities for growth-supporting capital. The guidance also requires potential grantees to submit a plan for how the SSBCI funding will expand access to capital for small businesses in underserved communities.
- **Consultation with Tribal Governments:** Treasury has engaged in extensive Tribal government outreach including through consultation, listening and information sessions, weekly Tribal government office hours, and one-on-one communication with Tribal governments and other stakeholders like Native Community Development Financial Institutions (Native CDFIs) in order to inform the design of an anticipated over $700 million in allocated funds to Tribal governments. Based on this engagement, 415 out of

574 (72 percent) federally recognized Tribes submitted a Notice of Intent to apply for SSBCI funds by December 11, 2021.

- **Significantly Expanding Data Collection from Small Businesses, Including Data on Race, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity:** On March 3, 2022, Treasury published an Interim Final Rule to collect demographic information, including data on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender identity, from small businesses that receive capital from SSBCI.[55] This is a historic effort to expand the collection of demographic information from small businesses, which will allow the Administration to have more detailed insights on program performance and the broader small business landscape.
- **Building Cross-Agency Partnerships on Technical Assistance for Underserved Small Businesses:** Treasury intends to partner with the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) as a national partner in helping deliver assistance to SEDI-owned businesses in accessing SSBCI and other federal and state small business support.

Economic Adjustment Assistance (Section 6001)

To support communities across the country as they seek to build more resilient local economies after the pandemic, ARP provided $3 billion in funding for the Economic Adjustment Assistance program operated by the Economic Development Administration (EDA) within the Department of Commerce. The $3 billion is nearly ten times EDA's typical annual appropriation. The program has been designed to address equity goals and projects, including: funding for skills training that is encouraged to reach underserved populations and areas; $300 million coal communities commitment; and the first dedicated funding for Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders in EDA's history.

The results so far indicate that EDA's equity efforts have been successful. For example, the 60 finalist coalitions in the Build Back Better Regional Challenge represent a broad swathe of the country, including rural, urban, and coastal areas. These finalists cover 45 states and Puerto Rico, include 12 coal communities, and more than 80 percent of the finalists propose to serve rural communities, including ten proposals that are focused on growing or developing agriculture and natural resource industries.[56] Over half of the lead applicants for finalists are either first-time EDA recipients or have not received an award in the last three years. Moreover, 20 percent of the finalists are in coal communities and 25 percent are in Indigenous communities.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Increasing Outreach and Support for Indigenous Communities:** EDA intentionally sought to support Indigenous communities through implementing an allocation of $100 million. This is the first dedicated funding for Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Native Pacific Islanders in EDA's history. EDA also made significant efforts to encourage these communities to apply for all of EDA's ARP programs. EDA hired its first-ever Tribal Coordinator in October 2021 and is leveraging that role to assist Indigenous Communities applying for EDA funding. In an effort to increase Tribal participation in grant programs, EDA published a new rule extending Tribal eligibility to include for-profit Tribal corporations that are wholly owned by and established for the

benefit of the Tribe. As a result of EDA's outreach and technical assistance, of the 60 Build Back Better Regional finalists, 15 (25 percent) represented Indigenous communities. Moreover, EDA received applications for the Indigenous Communities set-aside totaling over $400 million—more than four times the funding available for the program.[57]

- **Increased Outreach and Support to Underserved Populations and Communities:** EDA hosted 12 public webinars totaling over 20,000 attendees. EDA created new tools, templates, and technical assistance webinars to help first-time grantees navigate EDA's application process and new programs. EDA also hosted over 60 specific webinars and briefings to small groups to cover information about EDA's ARP programs and to encourage new applicants.
- **Dedicating Funding for Underserved Workers:** EDA dedicated $500 million to focus on workforce development programming in the form of the Good Jobs Challenge. This program is designed to provide skill building opportunities and to connect unemployed or underemployed workers to existing and emerging job opportunities, while encouraging workforce development providers to reach underserved communities, as well as women and other groups facing labor market barriers. EDA received 509 applications across all states and territories for the Good Jobs Challenge and will be making 25-50 awards in Summer 2022.
- **Backing Coal and Rural Communities:** To support communities impacted by the decline in the coal industry as they recover from the pandemic, EDA committed $300 million of its funds to support coal communities. EDA also partnered with the Interagency Working Group for Coal Communities to provide coordinated technical assistance and ensure strong applications. To further support coal and rural communities, EDA hired a Coal Communities Coordinator and detailed staff from the Department of Agriculture to serve as a Rural Communities Coordinator.
- **Using Equity as an Evaluation Criterion to Assess Competitiveness in Awards:** In addition to being an investment priority that informs award decisions for all programs, EDA used equity as an evaluation criterion to assess competitiveness for the first time, leveraging it in the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, Economic Adjustment Assistance grants, competitive Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation grants, and the Good Jobs Challenge. EDA used this evaluation criterion to ensure grantees of these four programs target and share economic benefits of the programs with underserved communities. Additionally, EDA was intentional about recruiting, selecting, and training a diverse group of experienced, qualified reviewers for its programs.

Paycheck Protection Program (Section 5001)

ARP appropriated an additional $7 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program—originally established by the CARES Act in March 2020, and funded with an additional $285 billion in December 2020—providing America's small businesses with the tools and resources they need to reopen, rehire, and build back better. Under ARP, PPP eligibility expanded to additional entities. However, from the outset, the Biden-Harris Administration has made delivering equitable relief to hard-hit small businesses a top priority, and took early action to remedy the inequities found in earlier versions of the program.

Within weeks of taking office, the Administration announced a number of policy changes to ensure access to the PPP for the smallest businesses and to companies that have been left behind in previous relief efforts. Overall, these changes ensured that the 2021 round of the PPP—which consisted of more than $271 billion in forgivable loans to nearly 6.4 million businesses—reached more of the smallest businesses and those located in low- and moderate-income communities. Additionally, a February 2022 study found that the 2021 PPP round demonstrated an improvement in loans to businesses in areas that had a high minority share of the population.[58] These findings align with a GAO report from September 2021.[59]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Instituting A 14-Day Period During Which Only Businesses with Fewer Than 20 Employees Could Apply for Relief:** Ninety-eight percent of small businesses have fewer than 20 employees. This exclusive application period allowed lenders to focus on serving these smallest businesses, which often need additional time to navigate the paperwork entailed in completing applications.
- **Helping Sole Proprietors, Independent Contractors, and Self-Employed Individuals Receive More Financial Support:** These types of businesses, which include home repair contractors, beauticians, and small independent retailers, make up a significant majority of all businesses. To address the access challenges identified above, the Biden-Harris Administration revised the loan calculation formula for these applicants to offer additional relief and established a $1 billion set aside for businesses in this category located in low- and moderate-income areas who do not have any employees.
- **Eliminating an Exclusionary Restriction that Prevented Small Business Owners Who Were Delinquent on Their Federal Student Loans from Obtaining Relief Through the PPP:** Working with the Departments of the Treasury and Education, SBA removed the student loan delinquency restriction to broaden access to PPP.
- **Eliminating the Restriction that Prevented Small Business Owners with Prior Non-Fraud Felony Convictions from Obtaining Relief through PPP**: To expand access to PPP, the Administration adopted bipartisan reforms included in the PPP Second Chance Act to eliminate the one-year look-back for non-fraud felonies unless the applicant or owner is incarcerated at the time of the application.
- **Clarifying That ITIN Holders Can Access PPP:** To eliminate uncertainty for lenders and borrowers, the SBA clarified via an FAQ how ITIN holders could access PPP.[60]
- **Closely Partnering with Community Financial Institutions to Increase PPP Lending:** The Administration also worked to increase the amount of lending made through community financial institutions and minority depository institutions.

Community Navigator Pilot Program (Section 5004)

ARP provides $100 million for the establishment of a Community Navigator pilot program at the Small Business Administration to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, private nonprofit organizations, resource partners, States, Tribes, and units of local government to ensure the delivery of free community navigator services to current or

prospective owners of eligible businesses. The goal of the program is to improve access to assistance programs and resources made available because of the COVID-19 pandemic by federal, state, Tribal, and local entities.

To implement this model, SBA awarded $100 million to 51 organizations selected as part of a rigorous review process to ensure geographic diversity and diversity of small business service segments. In turn, the 51 grantee organizations are working with more than 400 hyperlocal organizations to connect America's small businesses to SBA, and other federal, state, and local resources. The diversity of grantees reflects the diversity of America's entrepreneurs, including relevant expertise to ensure a diverse set of underserved entrepreneurs are able to access available services.[61]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Implementing a *"Hub And Spoke Navigator Model"* to Reach and Engage with New and Existing Entrepreneurs, Particularly Reaching Those Who Have Historically Been Unaware of or Have Had Difficulty Accessing SBA Resources:** The *hub and spoke* approach features a lead organization at the center of a network of "spoke" organizations that deploy trusted messengers to work with businesses in targeted communities.[62] These networks leverage the business development expertise of the central "hub" organization and the community credibility of "spoke" organizations to better connect businesses owners with critical services and assistance.
- **Ensuring Geographic Diversity and National Coverage of Grantees:** To ensure the greatest amount of diversity across geographies and to optimize the SBA's service delivery reach, the program established a tiered approach, awarding eight Tier 1 grants to organizations with a national footprint; 11 Tier 2 awards to organizations with statewide and/or regional reach; and, 32 Tier 3 awards to organizations focused on city, countywide and/or rural engagement.[63] All 50 states and Puerto Rico are covered by this pilot program.

Restaurant Revitalization Fund (Section 5003)

ARP established the Restaurant Revitalization Fund (RRF) to provide funding to help restaurants and other eligible businesses keep their doors open. RRF provided restaurants with funding equal to their pandemic-related revenue loss up to $10 million per business and no more than $5 million per physical location. RRF also included several provisions to address previous concerns that pandemic relief programs for businesses failed to reach businesses owned and controlled by women, veterans, and socially and economically-disadvantaged individuals, or reached them last.

The RRF program received more than 278,000 applications representing over $72.2 billion in requested funds. The Small Business Administration awarded all of the $28.6 billion in RRF assistance by June 30, 2021.[64] Nearly two-thirds of RRF funds ($18 billion) went to businesses owned by women, veterans, and economically and socially disadvantaged individuals.[65]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Reducing Barriers for Underserved Small Businesses to Access Available Funding**: Per the authorizing legislation, during the first 21 days of the program SBA prioritized

funding applications from businesses that were Tribally-owned or owned and controlled by women, veterans, and socially and economically-disadvantaged individuals.[66]

- **Dedicating Funding for Small Businesses to Access Funds Equitably:** ARP established an initial $5 billion amount of dedicated funding for applicants with gross receipts not more than $500,000. SBA created two additional funding allocations to further ensure an equitable distribution of funds and make sure the smallest restaurants and other eating establishments have equitable access: 1) $500 million for applicants with 2019 gross receipts not more than $50,000, and 2) $4 billion for applicants with 2019 gross receipts between $500,000 and $1.5 million.[67]
- **Expanding Language Accessibility in Outreach and Communications Efforts:** SBA conducted more than 600 outreach events in multiple languages leading up to the RRF launch to educate small business owners on eligibility requirements and how to apply. [68] In addition to English, SBA provided translated information about RRF eligibility requirements, application instructions, and FAQs in 17 languages.[69]
- **Innovating to Provide Easier Access to RRF Funds:** In April 2021, SBA announced a first-of-its-kind technology initiative to partner with point-of-sale providers, such as Clover, NCR Corporation, Square, and Toast to provide a consumer-centric approach to the delivery of RRF relief funding.[70] These partnerships allowed for thousands of restaurant owners to streamline their RRF application submission process, by allowing qualified restaurants to work directly with their point-of-sale service providers to help them apply for RRF.[71]

USDA Assistance and Support for Farmers, Ranchers, Forest Landowners, Operators, and Groups (Section 1006)

While USDA's expansive presence in rural communities is one of its greatest strengths, it is increasingly clear that the decentralized, local nature of information sharing and decision-making can exclude underserved communities and producers. Agriculture is a complex industry with significant upfront costs including land, seed, labor, fertilizer, and other inputs. In addition to assistance accessing affordable capital, producers often need assistance with business plan development, tax planning, or simply navigating the complexity of the financial institutions from which they are seeking to secure credit, be that USDA or elsewhere. These challenges are compounded in rural communities of persistent poverty where race and place combined have resulted in structural exclusion from financial systems and other ladders of opportunity. In instances where they are unable to access private capital, a producer may turn to USDA for assistance.

ARP Section 1006 provides direction and over $1 billion in funding for USDA to act to ensure underserved communities have the tools, programs, and support they need to succeed in agriculture. Section 1006 also provides funding to begin long-term racial equity work within USDA, including to provide technical assistance, improve access to credit, address heirs' property claims and other land access issues, and to establish an Equity Commission to identify barriers to accessing USDA programming. It also provides funds and direction to create career opportunities for next generation leaders in agriculture and to provide direct assistance to producers who have experienced discrimination.

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Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Listening to and Learning from Stakeholders to Inform Development of New Programs:** In March 2022, USDA held a two-day, all-of-USDA Tribal consultation on racial justice and equity that resulted in myriad inputs from Tribes with regard to how USDA programs and services can better serve Indian Country. Subsequently, USDA published a Request for Information and held listening sessions with stakeholders focused on how USDA programs can advance racial justice and equity. The input from stakeholders has helped to educate USDA staff and leadership and influenced how Section 1006 programming is being designed and funds deployed. Additional input from stakeholders will likely be requested in the months ahead.
- **Establishing an Equity Commission:** USDA established an Equity Commission comprised of external stakeholders who were announced on February 10, 2022.[72] Commission Members will conduct a thorough review of USDA policies and programs and provide the Secretary with a set of recommendations for how the Department can act to advance equity. The Equity Commission will also develop a report with a set of actionable recommendations to USDA for how the Department can address systemic barriers to access, uphold civil rights, and advance equity.
- **Deploying Funds for Technical Assistance:** USDA has deployed ARP resources in response to demands for more immediate technical assistance. On November 24, 2021, USDA announced $75 million for technical assistance partnerships focused on underserved producers, which will support partnerships with 20 technical assistance providers that will work closely with USDA over the course of the next five years.[73] The partner organizations selected have knowledge and expertise in providing technical assistance and support, with specific experience working with underserved communities. Partners will attend annual meetings as a collaborative group and will take part in quarterly virtual meetings with USDA. On March 9, 2022, USDA announced a Request for Assistance (RFA) that will provide at a minimum $25 million to additional organizations that will also provide technical assistance. Additional funds will be made available in the months ahead for efforts to address capital access, land access, and market access for underserved producers in a comprehensive way.
- **Knowledge Sharing Amongst Technical Assistance Providers**: To ensure Section 1006 technical assistance providers are delivering the services with a high level of quality and that they remain aligned on goals and intended outcomes, USDA is developing several channels of communication and knowledge sharing, including a website that hosts materials for use by the technical assistance providers, and lifts up success stories and lessons learned. USDA has also announced it will host annual clinics for outreach providers and technical assistance providers to ensure that USDA partner organizations have the knowledge, expertise, support, and organizational capacity essential to supporting underserved communities and effectively assisting producers as they navigate USDA programs and policies.
- **Working with Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs):** USDA is working closely with Minority Serving Institutions to create, support, and supplement agricultural research, education, and extension, and develop scholarship and internship pathways to federal employment. In the months ahead, USDA will make funding available to the groups of

MSI's specified in ARP to support career opportunities in agriculture for next generation leaders.

National Endowment for the Arts (Section 2021)

The NEA, an independent federal agency, is the only arts funder in the United States, public or private, that provides access to the arts in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. jurisdictions. ARP appropriated $135 million for fiscal year 2021 for grants, and relevant administrative expenses, to state arts agencies and regional arts organizations. ARP funds can be used for direct grants, and relevant administrative expenses that support organizations' programming and general operating expenses.

The NEA's direct grant program, open to arts and culture organizations throughout the country, received more than 7,500 applications, of which 41 percent had not applied to the NEA within the last ten years. This was an unprecedented number of applications for a single NEA grant program. Organizations recommended for funding through ARP grants include those serving underserved populations, organizations with small and medium-sized budgets, organizations from rural and urban communities, and organizations applying for federal support from the NEA for the first time.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Engaging in Public Outreach Activities:** The NEA organized a significant public engagement effort, which focused on organizations that would be new to federal and NEA funding. During the summer of 2021, NEA's public engagement efforts included thirty-four virtual workshops outlining the ARP opportunity. These webinars, hosted by arts and culture organizations, service organizations, and members of Congress, represented a wide diversity of regions, artistic disciplines, and budget sizes. More than 3,000 people participated in these events.
- **Focusing on Accessibility:** For the first time in its history, the NEA translated applications guidelines into Spanish and Chinese.[74] Corresponding translated press releases were also made available on the NEA website. In addition, several virtual workshops were offered with American Sign Language and live Spanish translation.
- **Ensuring Applicants Know How to Apply for Federal Funding:** The NEA offered robust technical assistance, above and beyond the virtual workshops also offered. This assistance program included twenty virtual question and answer sessions, during which potential applicants could ask questions of NEA program staff. Several Q&A sessions included Spanish translation and ASL. More than 1,200 participated in these events, and a dedicated email for Q&A was staffed with specialists to field subsequent questions.

Securing Dignified Housing and Living Conditions

Emergency Rental Assistance (Section 3201)

ARP appropriated $21.55 billion to the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program to provide households facing financial hardship up to 18 months of financial assistance for rent and utility payments, and other expenses related to housing. Combined with $25 billion in funding from the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021, the ERA program provided $46 billion in rental and utility assistance to those most in need that had to be implemented by the Biden-Harris Administration. With this pandemic aid, the Biden-Harris Administration established the country's first-ever nationwide emergency rental assistance program and set up or improved sites in every state, U.S. territory, over 400 cities and counties, and in over 300 Tribal Nations.

After a challenging start-up period, to date, $30 billion in assistance has been distributed or obligated and all of the $46.5 billion is now expected to be spent or deployed by mid-2022. In less than one year from the passage of ARP, ERA grantees made over 4.7 million payments to eligible renter households and landlords, with over 80 percent of funds delivered to very low-income households (those earning 50 percent of area median income or less). As a result of Administration-wide efforts and unprecedented ERA assistance, in 2021, eviction filings remained at 50.3 percent of historical averages over the year, according to Princeton's Eviction Lab, despite earlier fears of a major spike in evictions once the national eviction moratorium was lifted.[75]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Simplifying the Application Process:** In response to on-the-ground outreach by the White House and Treasury to detect and address start-up challenges, Treasury continually put forward guidance to encourage responsible but simplified application processes in order to expedite critical relief in time to prevent avoidable evictions.[76] For example, in August 2021, Treasury issued guidance that clarified the permissibility of self-attestation for all eligibility criteria during the public health emergency, subject to appropriate safeguards.[77] Treasury further encouraged grantees to avoid establishing documentation requirements that would create barriers and urged user friendly application processes that were available in multiple modalities; provided guidance on the use of fact-specific proxies for eligibility determination; and tailored the definition of Area Median Income (AMI) for Tribes to match existing income-based program requirements.
- **Prioritizing Lowest-Income Households:** Treasury recommended that grantees prioritize assistance to households with incomes less than 50 percent of AMI and to households with one or more members who had been unemployed for at least 90 days. Treasury also encouraged grantees to target their outreach based on social vulnerability index scores, risk of evictions, or other measures of housing insecurity to ensure high risk communities have access to assistance.[78]
- **Increasing Program Awareness and Access:** To address lack of awareness of the program, Treasury encouraged grantees to partner with community-based organizations, tenant organizations, promotoras (Spanish-speaking community health workers), and trusted community leaders to increase awareness and provide tenants with application

assistance, among other interventions. The U.S. Digital Service and Consumer Financial Protection Bureau developed tools that renters and landlords can use to identify funding and resources, including the Rental Assistance Finder Tool.[79] In addition, the White House hosted a day of awareness by enlisting government agencies, dozens of nonprofits and faith-based organizations, and private sector companies like PayPal, Square, Lyft, GoFundMe, Propel, and others to promote the CFPB Tool.

- **Whole-Of-Government Effort to Encourage Eviction Diversion Programs and Increase Access to Legal Counsel:** The White House, Department of Justice, and Treasury made major pushes to advance eviction prevention and the adoption of court-based eviction diversion programs to increase access to ERA through three White House Summits on Eviction Prevention—and unprecedented calls for court diversion policies and increased access to legal counsel by Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta and a larger call to action to state Supreme Court Justices and the larger legal community by the Attorney General.[80] This also led to a White House and Justice Department event—that included Second Gentleman Douglas Emhoff—which featured a listening session with key stakeholders to identify and expand creative innovations in access to justice, including those designed to keep renters in their homes.[81] Other efforts included highlighting best practices and urging mayors to adopt eviction diversion strategies; launching a website that spotlights eviction diversion and prevention models; and convening ninety-nine law schools across thirty-five states to encourage their continued response to the eviction crisis.[82]

Emergency Housing Vouchers (Section 3202)

Through the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is providing approximately 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) in order to assist individuals and families who are homeless, at-risk of homelessness, fleeing, or attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking, or were recently homeless or have a high risk of housing instability. Housing vouchers have been shown to significantly reduce homelessness, overcrowding, and subsequent housing displacement.[83] Given the link between COVID-19 transmission and housing instability, the vouchers are also a critical pandemic mitigation strategy.[84]

The EHV program is one of the largest voucher issuances since the inception of the housing choice voucher program, and contributes significantly to efforts to permanently reduce homelessness in communities across the country. On average, households participating in the EHV program receive $936 a month in assistance to support housing expenses. Thus far, the majority of EHVs have gone to extremely low, very low, and low-income households, with many receiving public and disability benefits.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Providing Technical Assistance and Office Hours:** To assist PHAs and their partners in program implementation, HUD hosted weekly office hours for the first three months of the program, followed by bi-weekly sessions. These sessions focused on a variety of topics, including advancing equity using EHVs and how to serve survivors by using trauma-informed practices and respecting confidentiality to remove barriers to access.[85]

- **Providing Housing Search Assistance to Families:** Unique to the EHV program, HUD required PHAs to make housing search assistance available to all EHV families during their initial housing search. PHAs were allowed to use administrative fees for this purpose and, to date, have dedicated over $1.7 million in search assistance expenditures.
- **Prohibiting Admission Denial For History of Eviction:** In the Housing Choice Voucher program, the PHA may deny an applicant admission to the program because of prior eviction from federally assisted housing.[86] Using its waiver authority, HUD provided alternative requirements for PHAs barring households from participating in EHV due to an eviction from federally assisted housing, owed rent or damages to the PHA or another PHA, breach of an agreement to a PHA for debts owed, violation of alcohol abuse standards, or certain drug-related criminal activity. Opening the program to households with these circumstances increased the ability of PHAs to serve populations with the highest risk of homelessness. Barring programs from considering drug-related criminal activity also prevents the potential discriminatory effect that reliance on this history may have.[87]

Housing Assistance and Supportive Services for Native Americans and Native Hawaiians (Section 11003)

ARP appropriated $750 million to maintain and fund affordable housing and respond to the housing needs and imminent threats to health and safety related to the pandemic among Native Americans, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians.

The $750 million includes several critical grants programs to address housing and community needs, including:

- $450 million for Indian Housing Block Grants (IHBG-ARP) to fund affordable housing activities
- $5 million for Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grants (NHHBG-ARP) to provide affordable housing, including rental assistance, to Native Hawaiian families
- $280 million for Indian Community Development Block Grants (ICDBG) to address imminent threats to health and safety
- $10 million for technical assistance related to HUD's Tribal ARP programs

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Conducting Frequent Outreach to Tribal Leaders:** Within a week of the passage of ARP, HUD's Office of Native American Programs sought feedback from Tribal Leaders on the implementation process and how to prioritize funding. HUD incorporated verbal and written feedback from many Tribes and Tribally Designated Housing Entities in the Implementation Notices for the programs and also released guidance and FAQs that addressed barriers and challenges to equitable implementation.[88]
- **Exercising Waiver Authorities to Provide Flexibility in the Administration and Delivery of Funds:** This allowed Tribes to quickly address the significant housing and infrastructure needs of communities during the pandemic, including by:
    - **Allowing Remote and Less Frequent Income Verification:** Given the challenges facing families seeking assistance, instead of requiring families to

periodically verify income by providing documentation, HUD allowed IHBG-ARP and NHHBG-ARP recipients to allow less frequent income recertifications and to verify income of applicants and residents remotely if the recipient or eligible families choose to do so, including allowing income self-certification.[89] Many Tribes require assisted families to annually recertify and demonstrate that they meet income eligibility requirements. This relief allowed ARP recipients impacted by the pandemic to do so more easily, safely, and less frequently.

- **Funding Flexibility for Rent, Utility, and Mortgage Payments:** Generally, ICDBG funds may not be used for income payments. In light of the pandemic's substantial negative impact on Native American families' ability to work, earn an income, pay their rent or mortgage, access or pay for food and clothing, and access many other essential services, HUD allowed grantees to provide emergency payments for low- and moderate-income individuals or families impacted by COVID-19 for items such as food, medicine, clothing, and other necessities, as well as rental assistance and utility payment assistance for up to six months and emergency mortgage assistance for no more than three months.
- **Expanding Eligibility for Rental Assistance:** HUD expanded eligibility beyond low-income Native Hawaiian families who reside on the Hawaiian Home Lands to those who reside both on and off the Hawaiian Home Lands, as defined in Section 801(9) of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self Determination Act of 1996.

Homeowner Assistance Fund (Section 3206)

ARP provided nearly $10 billion to establish the Homeowner Assistance Fund, based in the Department of Treasury, to mitigate financial hardship associated with the COVID-19 pandemic by providing funds to eligible entities for the purpose of preventing homeowner mortgage delinquencies, defaults, foreclosures, loss of utilities or home energy services, and displacements of homeowners experiencing financial hardship after January 21, 2020. At least 60 percent of HAF funds must be used for homeowners with income at or below 100 percent of Area Median Income or median U.S. income, and socially disadvantaged individuals must be prioritized with remaining funds.

The Administration implemented a series of measures that protected homeowners from foreclosure, including extending previously-imposed foreclosure moratoriums and forbearance options for nearly 11 million households whose mortgages are guaranteed by the federal government. As a result of these protections, foreclosure filings in 2021 were at a historic low with 29 percent fewer filings than in 2020 and 95 percent below the 2010 peak experienced in the previous economic downturn during the Great Recession.[90]

HAF was designed so that state homeowner assistance programs would become fully operational starting in January 2022, in order to provide foreclosure support to homeowners even after the end of foreclosure protections that expired at the end of 2021. **As of May 23, 2022, Treasury has disbursed over $9 billion to HAF programs nationwide to distribute to eligible homeowners. To date, 49 states and territories, as well as the District of Columbia, are accepting applications through full or pilot programs, and Treasury has approved all but two state and territorial HAF plans.**

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Promoting Best Practices by Centering Assistance Based on Disparate Hardships and Stakeholder Feedback:** Treasury has required state participants to structure their programs and target assistance based on data-driven assessments of homeowner needs, with an emphasis on data that identifies disparate hardships across demographic groups and encourages participants to engage in pilot programs that test such assessments. Treasury also strongly encouraged participants to inform their plans with input from Tribal Councils, community-based organizations, providers of housing counseling, and/or providers of legal assistance to homeowners facing foreclosure or displacement.
- **Increasing Awareness Among Homeowners in Need:** To facilitate enrollment of low-income homeowners, Treasury requires HAF state participants to include a description of their strategy for reaching underserved communities in their HAF plan.
- **Increasing Access for Low-Income and Socially Disadvantaged Homeowners:** Treasury-issued guidance encouraging participants to avoid establishing documentation requirements that are likely to pose barriers to participation. To simplify enrollment, HAF participants may also use self-attestation combined with a fact-specific proxy—such as median income in the census block that includes the home—in determining household income for purposes of income eligibility. HAF guidance also encourages the use of housing counseling/legal service providers that have experience serving low to moderate income populations, addressing housing discrimination, and providing counseling in multiple languages.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance (Section 2911)

ARP provides $4.5 billion, more than doubling previous annual appropriations, to remain available through FY 2022 for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). LIHEAP, which has been in existence for over 40 years, provides federally funded assistance for families to help manage costs associated with home energy bills, energy crises, weatherization and energy-related minor home repairs.

The economic fallout from the pandemic has further strained budgets of low-income households and put them at higher risk of utility shut-offs. At the beginning of the pandemic, many state and local governments imposed moratoria on utility disconnections to protect vulnerable households. However, as the pandemic progressed, many of these moratoria expired, leaving households vulnerable to devastating utility shut-offs.[91]

LIHEAP is on track to serve more households in FY 2022 than in any prior year in the program's over 40-year history. The LIHEAP program is also in the process of developing reporting that will capture key demographic data and allow the program to better monitor and advance its equity goals. Beginning in FY 2023, grantees will be required to provide the number of assisted applicants by race, ethnicity, and gender.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Quickly and Automatically Distributing Benefits:** The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at HHS urged grantees to consider expediting payments to

households that have previously received LIHEAP assistance and simplify eligibility verification.

- **Expanding Outreach to Newly Eligible Households:** ACF urged grantees to consider additional outreach to households who may need energy assistance for the first time. Although many receive LIHEAP year after year, the economic disruption of the pandemic increased demand for assistance. These newly-eligible households may have been unfamiliar with how to access benefits, and grantees helped these families access the unprecedented LIHEAP resources available as well as referred them to other benefits.
- **Developing Robust Technical Assistance Tools:** ACF developed tools to help grantees understand the impact of home energy costs in their state and adequately target resources to reduce the energy burden for low income households. This included the development and release of grantee-specific profiles, as well as the release of an energy price dashboard based on data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration that provided information for every state. ACF also released a second dashboard which provides information on the progression of extreme heat over time, the health impacts of extreme heat, and visualizations on how LIHEAP can alleviate extreme heat stress for vulnerable populations.[92]
- **Organized First-Ever Coordination with Emergency Rental Assistance and Other Programs:** The White House organized technical assistance across the federal government to ensure programs were well-coordinated. As this was the first year households could apply for ERA, coordination with LIHEAP was particularly important. ACF and Treasury released guidance clarifying how grantees of LIHEAP could coordinate with ERA and other housing programs funded in ARP to quickly provide benefits to eligible households. These best practices included coordinating outreach to households, establishing regular communication with program leaders and energy providers, streamlining intake, and referring across programs as appropriate. For example, renters not fully served by LIHEAP could be referred to ERA, and homeowners could be referred to LIHEAP. To facilitate this coordination, ACF and Treasury conducted webinars to encourage close collaboration across programs and held several listening sessions to share best practices across jurisdictions.
- **Issued Call to Action to Utilities:** In November 2021, the White House issued a call to action to energy providers to prevent devastating utility shut-offs and help expedite the delivery of unprecedented federal aid. By January 2022, the White House announced that it had welcomed commitments from fourteen major utility companies across the country, as well as a major delivered fuel trade association.[93]

Funding for Water Assistance (Section 2912)

ARP provided funding for the Nation's first-ever water assistance program, the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), with an appropriated $500 million for grants to states, territories and Tribes to assist low-income households that pay a high proportion of household income for drinking water and wastewater services. This was in addition to $638 million provided under the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. The program is administered by the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Office of Community

Services (OCS), which also administers the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

To date, HHS has allocated over $1 billion of the $1.1 billion of available LIHWAP funds to 49 states, over 100 Tribes, five territories and the District of Columbia. The remaining funding is expected to be allocated to nine Tribal grant recipients.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Providing Startup Support, Especially for Tribal Entities and Smaller Areas:** In November 2021, OCS launched training and technical assistance supports for grant recipients across OCS, including support with program planning, implementation, and performance measurement. The training and technical assistance focuses largely on Tribal and rural communities, with a goal of helping underserved communities increase their capacity and infrastructure to launch new water assistance programs.
- **Encouraging Successful, Evidence-Based Local Public Outreach Campaigns to Raise Program Awareness:** The Grant Implementation Plan template describes the types of outreach activities that have been most successful in other OCS programs.[94] All grant recipients are required to submit plans and indicate what outreach activities they will use to increase awareness of LIHWAP among eligible households.
- **Easing Documentation Burdens to Improve Access:** To help address the administrative burden of documentation requirements for eligible households, OCS released a sample household application.[95] The application was developed in partnership with the United State Digital Service and includes plain language instructions and streamlines information requests for household applicants. The application also encourages grant recipients to rely on categorical eligibility based on a recipient's enrollment in other federal benefits programs.[96]
- **Ensuring Minimum Funding for Tribal Entities:** OCS established a minimum award for tribes of $10,000, which is designed to ensure smaller tribes have a feasible amount of funding to initiate this new program and effectively serve their communities.
- **Addressing Water Vendors Concerns and Encouraging Participation to Ensure Equitable Access:** In August 2021, OCS held a public information session to provide details about the program to water service vendors and answer any questions.[97] The webinar attracted 2,000 vendor representatives. In coordination with the White House and the Treasury Department, OCS has conducted training and technical assistance regarding best practices for coordination with utility vendors, including a webinar focused on coordination efforts between LIHWAP, LIHEAP and the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program and successful partnerships with utility vendors.[98]
- **Issuing New Data Reporting Requirements, Including Assistance by Poverty Level, Vulnerable Population, Race, and Ethnicity:** To guide implementation and provide ongoing monitoring, OCS implemented a two-stage reporting process: (1) a quarterly report that provides initial implementation information and allows for course corrections and targeted technical assistance and (2) an ongoing annual reporting process. The first LIHWAP quarterly report was due January 31, 2022.[99] For the first time, OCS published

data through an interactive mapping feature on the LIHWAP Website available for the public.[100]

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Investing in Equity and Opportunity for our Children and Young Adults

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (Section 2001)

The ARP Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) provides $122 billion to states and school districts to help safely reopen schools and address the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on students' learning and mental health. ARP also provides $800 million to states and school districts to identify and provide wrap-around services to homeless children and youth and enable them to attend school and participate fully in school activities.

At the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, only 46 percent of schools were offering in-person instruction, and there were 624,000 fewer staff working in our schools than before the pandemic.[101] Since that time, as of April 2022, nearly every school is offering full-time, in-person instruction, and more than 300,000 staff jobs have been created, cutting the gap nearly in half.[102] States and school districts are using funds for critical priorities. Independent analysis on a representative sample of 4,000 school districts' plans covering over 60 percent of ARP ESSER funds found nearly 60 percent of funds are being used to invest in staffing, combat learning loss, and support the physical and mental health of students and educators. Another 24 percent is being invested in keeping schools operating safely.[103]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Issuing Guidance and Technical Assistance to Safely Reopen Schools, Including for Schools Supporting Underserved Students:** To quickly address the need to return to safe, in-person instruction, the Department issued proactive guidance on allowable uses of funds, including a reopening handbook that contained three volumes and a FAQ document on the use of ARP ESSER funds. [104,105] The Department also hosted the Safe School Reopening Summit, in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) officials, to further highlight and encourage safe in-person instruction. The Department released guidance on allowable uses of funds to address labor shortages, including using flexibilities under federal funding and programs to help recruit and retain additional staff.[106]
- **Establishing First-Ever Maintenance of Equity Requirements and Providing Guidance:** The legislation included a Maintenance of Equity first requirement, the first of its kind in federal legislation, which ensures that in the event that state or local funding cuts to education are necessary, state or local education agencies (LEAs) cannot 1) disproportionately reduce per pupil funding to high-need LEAs or schools, or 2) reduce per pupil funding to the highest-poverty LEAs beyond their FY 2019 level. The Department of Education worked closely with states to provide guidance on implementing this new provision.[107]
- **Developing a New Homeless Children and Youth Fund (HCY):** ARP created the HCY Fund in order to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness. The Department distributed the $800 million in ARP HCY funds in two separate disbursements, making the first allocation, 25 percent of a total state allocation, available immediately to states to

supplement existing programs and address the urgent needs of students experiencing homelessness. With ARP HCY funds, SEAs have hired additional staff, partnered with community-based organizations to improve the identification of students experiencing homelessness, and improved data capacity within districts. All ARP HCY state plans have been posted to the Department's website.[108]

- **Requiring State Education Agencies (SEA) and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to Create Plans to Ensure Effective Use of Funds, Including for Students from Underserved Groups:** The Department required SEAs and LEAs to articulate in their plans how evidence-based programs would help students impacted by the pandemic, particularly those students from underserved student subgroups. All plans were required to be posted publicly to promote transparency and accountability. [109]
- **Requiring the Consultation of Community Stakeholders in Development of SEA and LEA Plans**: The Department of Education required SEAs and LEAs to seek input from representatives of historically underserved groups when developing their plans. The Department also conducted significant outreach to encourage stakeholders to engage with SEAs and LEAs on plan development. In spring 2021, the Department launched a series of webinars with the Secretary of Education and senior Department staff to encourage key stakeholder engagement, including a session with parent-serving organizations (with specific attention to ensuring diversity) and with civil rights and equity organizations.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Section 2014)

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges states and school systems were facing in providing equitable, high-quality, and inclusive services to children with disabilities and their families. When schools and early intervention providers closed during the initial months of the pandemic in 2020, many children with disabilities and their families lost vital, specialized services. Initial reports suggest that children with disabilities have faced significant regression due to lack of services and inaccessible technology.[110] Part B and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) authorize assistance to states to support the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities and the provision and coordination of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, respectively.

ARP provided more than $3 billion in supplemental funding for Fiscal Year 2021 for three IDEA formula grant programs. The funding is obligated through September 2023 and must be liquidated by end of January 2024.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Amplifying ARP IDEA Funds for Stakeholders:** A critical element of implementation has been amplification of the ARP IDEA funds for stakeholders, including of the availability of funding for states and districts and the vast allowable use of funds to address the inequities exacerbated by the pandemic. To support these needs, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) released multiple guidance documents to promote the use of funds. This includes establishing a webpage to house resources related to ARP IDEA funding. [111]

- **Releasing Equity-Focused Guidance:** OSEP released guidance highlighting the impact of the pandemic on the progress of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.[112] In the guidance, OSEP emphasized the importance of equitable access to high-quality early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, with a particular emphasis on children who have been disproportionately affected compared to their peers without disabilities.[113]
- **Engaging in Robust Stakeholder Listening Sessions:** OSEP received stakeholder feedback on policy issues related to IDEA and its implementation during the pandemic. Key topics included student behavior, transition to college and career, educator shortages, early childhood education, parental engagement, professional development, and supporting students with significant disabilities.

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (Section 2003)

ARP provided $39.6 billion for the Department of Education to make grants to institutions of higher education (IHEs) to serve students and ensure learning continues during the pandemic. This represents historic investments in our nation's institutions that educate students, including students who come from communities most affected by the pandemic. HEERF was designed to prioritize institutions with the greatest need, including dedicated funds directed toward Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and funding for other under-resourced institutions. Institutions are required to dedicate approximately half of these funds toward emergency financial aid grants directly to students.

HEERF is one of the largest single investments ever made in institutional and student grants into many of our nation's most under-resourced institutions of higher education, including:

- More than $10 billion to community colleges
- More than $2.7 billion to Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Approximately $190 million to Tribal Colleges and Universities
- Approximately $11 billion to Hispanic-Serving Institutions
- $5 billion to Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions
- Almost $1 billion to Predominantly Black Institutions

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Prioritizing Institutions and Students with the Greatest Need:** Under the Department of Education's distribution of ARP, funds were *first* disbursed to institutions serving students with the greatest need—community colleges, Tribal Colleges, HBCUs, and other MSIs. In addition to distributing the funds expeditiously, the Department held briefings with college and association leaders on the HEERF program, which reached more than 3,000 colleges and 75 federal or state associations to inform program implementation. In February 2022, the Department announced applications for the final $198 million of ARP HEERF funding and the only funding not allocated by formula. The Department decided to focus this program on community colleges and rural institutions of higher education serving a high population of low-income students and experiencing enrollment declines, in order to prioritize institutions and students with high need.[114]

- **Expanding Equitable Access to Emergency Aid:** To administer HEERF equitably, the Department of Education issued a final rule in May 2021 that expanded equitable access to emergency student financial aid to all students, not just those that are eligible for student aid (Title IV-eligible). Under this rule, all students who are or were enrolled in an institution during the national emergency are eligible for emergency financial aid grants from HEERF, regardless of whether they completed a FAFSA or are eligible for Title IV aid programs.[115] Through this decision, the Administration aided a larger number of economically disadvantaged students, veterans, and active-duty service members, as well as numerous others who are unable to submit the FAFSA. The new regulation and associated guidance direct colleges to prioritize students with exceptional need and with extraordinary financial circumstances regardless of citizenship.
- **Addressing Barriers to Retention and Completion, Particularly for Underserved Students:** The Department has provided guidance that enables institutions to use HEERF to eliminate barriers and promote student retention and completion, particularly barriers for underserved students that were further exacerbated by the pandemic. For example, the Department released Frequently Asked Questions noting that institutions are prohibited from placing other restrictions on students in determining need and distributing grants, such as conditioning the receipt of emergency financial aid grants to students on continued or future enrollment; establishing minimum GPA requirements; and imposing other academic, athletic performance, or good standing requirements.[116]
- **Increasing Awareness and Providing Technical Assistance, Including for Institutions Serving Communities of Color:** The Department has worked to provide comprehensive guidance to institutions on allowable uses of funds and encourage an equitable recovery through FAQs, webinars, presentations, ongoing technical assistance, and in public speeches and presentations. In March 2022, the Department also conducted community-focused listening sessions with membership associations and TCUs, MSIs, and HBCUs directly impacted by legislative changes in order to inform guidance on the expanded use of funds to include construction and real property.

Extension and Expansion of Pandemic EBT (Section 1108)

Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) was authorized in March 2020 under Section 1101 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA). As originally enacted, P-EBT provided benefits to families to replace the value of free or reduced-price school meals lost as a result of the pandemic-related closure of their children's schools. ARP expanded P-EBT to cover the summer months, extended P-EBT through the end of the COVID-19 public health emergency, and allowed territories that do not operate the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to provide P-EBT to children in child care.

States were able to issue P-EBT cards (or add benefits to existing cards) to well over 30 million children in the summer of 2021—a greater than tenfold increase over previous summer feeding programs.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Releasing Guidance for Quick Implementation:** To improve the distribution and efficiency of P-EBT benefits to eligible children, USDA released a set of Summer P-EBT

Q&As and developed a simple P-EBT summer plan template—allowing states to elect a USDA-determined standard benefit.[117] This standard benefit relieves states of the challenge of having to determine their own benefit levels based on state-specific school district calendars.[118]

- **Simplifying Program Administration to Reduce Administrative Burdens and Ensure Access to Students:** Many schools operated under "hybrid schedules" in school year 2020-2021, where students attended school in-person on some days and virtually on other days. Rather than issue different P-EBT benefit levels for children with different hybrid schedules, most states elected to issue a single benefit to these children that reflected the average number of virtual learning days in schools with hybrid schedules. This simplification served to reduce the administrative burden on states and school districts and may have served to speed the delivery of benefits in some states.
- **Leveraging Existing Data to Increase Program Access to Eligible Students:** States that distributed benefits based on existing contact information in their SNAP and student information systems in school year 2020-2021 were able to distribute benefits automatically, without imposing an additional application burden on families. However, many of these states were faced with significant volumes of returned mail. In response, states invested considerable time and effort to locate the intended beneficiaries.
- **Addressing Data Gaps***:* Most state P-EBT school plans rely on individual school districts to submit student-specific eligibility data to the state. With USDA encouragement, states have invested considerable effort to ensure the cooperation of all school districts with potentially eligible children. When that fails, USDA has routinely approved state requests to issue benefits to children who were missed by the states' prior year P-EBT programs.
- **Using Federal Funds to Support State and Local Program Administration and Advance Equitable Outcomes:** P-EBT provides funding to state and local agencies for administrative costs, which has been essential to the successful operation of P-EBT in many states.[119] For example, almost all states claimed reimbursement for their efforts to increase awareness and access to P-EBT, including through outreach, communication, and promotion efforts.

Investments in AmeriCorps (Section 2206)

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for volunteerism and national service, provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement. ARP invests approximately $1 billion in AmeriCorps to support the agency's core programming in communities and allow for the agency to offer more national service and volunteer opportunities to the American public through AmeriCorps programs. The vast majority of these funds are dedicated to increasing the living allowances of AmeriCorps members.

Working with 2,000 nonprofit, faith-based and neighborhood organizations, federal agencies, state and local governments, and national organizations, AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers have supported contact tracing and vaccination efforts, collected and distributed food, tutored students, conducted wellness checks for homebound individuals, and more.

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Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Increasing Living Allowances for AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps VISTA members:** ARP increased living allowances by an average of 12 percent to allow for more members from varying socioeconomic backgrounds to consider AmeriCorps Service. The 12 percent increase represents the greatest single year increase in more than a decade and responds to stakeholder feedback indicating that the living allowance amount is a barrier to service. ARP funds also made implementation of a VISTA member living allowance increase possible. This increase, along with annual cost of living adjustments, resulted in 88 percent of VISTA members seeing a living allowance increase.
- **Launching a Recruitment Pilot to Expand the Diversity of the Pool of Candidates Volunteering with AmeriCorps:** Through expansion of AmeriCorps partnerships and development of technology resources, the agency is working to build its recruitment pipeline to identify and engage new national service audiences. Specific efforts include email marketing and digital acquisition campaigns that utilize diverse media networks, and the creation of joint recruitment campaigns with priority audiences, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), community colleges, and high schools.

Closing Health Disparities

Health Insurance Premium Tax Credit (Section 9661)

ARP lowered premiums for most people enrolled in an Affordable Care Act (ACA) Marketplace health plan and expanded access to financial assistance for consumers. Under the ARP, ACA Marketplace premium tax credits temporarily become more generous in two main ways: 1) many consumers became eligible for higher tax credit amounts to help cover their Marketplace health plan premiums, with many premiums decreasing on average by $50 per person per month and $85 per policy per month; and 2) the maximum household income limit for the Advance Premium Tax Credit (APTC) was eliminated for the 2021 and 2022 coverage years—previously, only households with incomes below 400 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) could qualify for financial assistance and now households with higher incomes may qualify, if otherwise eligible.[120]

During the first year of the Biden-Harris Administration, nearly 6 million people newly signed up for more affordable health coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplaces.[121] ARP increased affordability for many Marketplace plans, and contributed to a record-breaking Open Enrollment Period in 2022, where 14.5 million consumers nationwide signed up for health coverage, a 21 percent increase from the previous year. Notably, since President Biden took office, nearly 700,000 rural Americans have gained health coverage.[122] Four out of five consumers could find quality coverage on HealthCare.gov for under $10 a month after tax credits.[123]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Reducing Burden and Streamlining the Consumer Experience:** In order to make it simple for the public to take advantage of the savings under ARP if they were renewing coverage, CMS conducted an administrative process called a batch redetermination in August 2021. This action recalculated the Advance Premium Tax Credit according to the ARP provisions for eligible enrollees and automatically applied the savings in health insurance coverage for many of those who were enrolled.[124] Doing so helped lower the cost of monthly premiums for consumers who do not actively return to update their applications and minimized barriers for enrollees attempting to access increased financial help.[125]
- **Making the 2021 Special Enrollment Period (SEP) Available on HealthCare.gov:** The Biden-Harris Administration made an extended 2021 SEP available on HealthCare.gov, which allowed people who needed health insurance to sign up for coverage from February 15 – August 15. Over 2.8 million people signed up for new health insurance through HealthCare.gov under the 2021 SEP, and through the State-based Marketplaces during the same period.[126] HHS estimates that over 90 percent of consumers who enrolled during the SEP saw their premiums reduced due to tax credits furnished by ARP. Notably, HHS reports that the establishment of the 2021 SEP led to a more diverse group of consumers in states using Healthcare.gov compared to previous years (among those reporting their race and ethnicity): 15 percent of consumers identified as African American, compared to nine percent and 11 percent in 2019 and 2020,

respectively, and the percentage of consumers who self-reported as Hispanic/Latino increased to 19 percent, up from 16 percent in both 2019 and 2020.[127]

- **Strategically Investing in Outreach and Awareness:** To promote enrollment into health coverage, HHS took a number of steps to increase outreach and awareness in communities. HHS quadrupled the number of navigators available to help individuals enroll in coverage by providing $100 million to navigator organizations. HHS also partnered with cultural marketing experts and community-based organizations to build more specific campaigns that target outreach to Blacks, Spanish and English-speaking Latinos, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. The Administration also increased outreach through the "Champions for Coverage" program, a community initiative that works with more than 1,000 local organizations to conduct outreach and education about coverage and enrollment.

Increase in Access to Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) (Section 9817)

ARP's estimated $12.7 billion increase in funding represented a *rare opportunity* for states to identify and implement changes aimed at addressing existing HCBS workforce and structural issues, expand the capacity of critical services, and begin to meet the needs of people on HCBS waitlists and family caregivers. This funding also provided states an important opportunity to enhance individual autonomy and community integration in accordance with the home and community-based settings regulation, *Olmstead* implementation,[128] and other rebalancing efforts. **CMS estimates that nearly 8 million beneficiaries currently use the HCBS services eligible for the ARP Section 9817 FMAP increase**.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Increasing Accessibility to Services:** Using these funds, states have implemented in-home and mobile COVID-19 vaccination programs for people with disabilities and older adults, as well as the expansion of coverage of HCBS to those who are currently on wait lists. States have also expanded access to assistive technologies to promote independence and community integration.
- **Enabling Dignified and Affordable Housing:** States have used this funding to develop deed-restricted accessible and affordable housing units for people with disabilities and to provide additional HCBS to support people to return home and avoid a skilled nursing facility admission following a hospitalization. States have also used funds to build partnerships to increase access to affordable and accessible housing and housing assistance for people with disabilities and older adults. In addition, housing-related services and supports, such as home accessibility modifications and case management and other supportive services have been funded to help people obtain and maintain housing.
- **Innovative Service Delivery Methods:** States are using funds to implement new behavioral health crisis response services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as to develop new initiatives to increase access to competitive integrated employment for people with disabilities.

- **Providing Structural Programmatic Support:** These funds are also being used to support the HCBS workforce. Funds are used to provide recruitment and retention bonuses, pay increases, and student loan forgiveness for direct support professionals, including behavioral health providers, as well as developing certification and training programs for direct support professionals.

Medicaid and CHIP Coverage for Pregnant and Postpartum Individuals (Sections 9812 and 9822)

Medicaid is the largest single payer of postpartum services and covers 42 percent of all births in the nation. Approximately 12 percent of pregnancy-related deaths occur between six weeks and one year following the birth of a child, and these deaths are more likely to occur among populations covered by Medicaid. Black women are more than three times as likely as White women to die from pregnancy-related causes, while American Indian and Alaskan Native women are more than twice as likely.[129] CDC reports from state maternal mortality review committees found that 66 percent of deaths that occur in the postpartum period are preventable with appropriate follow-up care.[130]

ARP provides states with a new option to extend Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) postpartum health coverage from 60 days up to 12 months—a six-fold increase. This option helps postpartum individuals maintain health care coverage in an effort to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality and to improve well-baby milestones. States that want to take advantage of this option were allowed to do so starting on April 1, 2022, and the option is available to states for five years.[131]

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Ensuring Access Through Efforts to Increase State Participation:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released a detailed letter to State Health Officials (SHO) to announce this new coverage extension option and provide detailed guidance to states.[132] CMS continues to provide technical assistance and resources for states to facilitate use of the extended postpartum health insurance coverage. Eighteen states have already acted to expand coverage, by either having an approved 1115 waiver or state plan amendment, or submitting a 1115 waiver or state plan amendment.
- **Conducting Outreach to Eligible Beneficiaries to Ensure Awareness About Their Coverage:** CMS is working closely with states to ensure that when postpartum coverage is extended, appropriate outreach is conducted to inform individuals about their new eligibility for continued coverage, especially those no longer enrolled in Medicaid and CHIP.

Family Violence Prevention and Services Program (Section 2204)

Studies show that an estimated one in four women and one in ten men have experienced physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by an intimate partner and reported an incident during their lifetime.[133] Research in the *American Journal of Emergency Medicine*, as well as a later report by the National Commission on COVID-19 and Criminal Justice, showed significant increases in domestic violence and intimate partner violence during the pandemic.[134] While the precise dynamics driving the increase are unclear, researchers noted that lockdowns, increased social

isolation with an abusive partner, and increased barriers to accessing services and community support likely were contributing factors. Additionally, increases in pandemic-driven economic stressors, such as job loss and inability to pay rent, are also known risk factors associated with intimate partner violence.[135]

ARP provided a total of nearly $1 billion in supplemental funding to support services for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and their children, including increased support for sexual assault service providers and culturally specific services. The funds also support COVID-19 testing, vaccines, mobile health units, and other support for domestic violence services programs and to address other needs resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency for millions of domestic violence survivors nationwide. This funding is administered through the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) Program of the Family and Youth Services Bureau in HHS.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Supporting Tribes**: Program staff participated in Tribal consultations to inform FVPSA program guidance, FAQ documents, and additional technical assistance. Through this process, Tribes and Tribal Organizations identified barriers which often prevented Tribal grantees from fully accessing program funds, and addressed these challenges in the following ways:
  - No funding match was required for the supplemental grant awards or subawards, which often limits participation by under resourced governments and organizations.
  - Tribal resolutions were not required as part of the abbreviated application process, which reduced the burden on Tribal programs to apply for the supplemental awards.
  - Funding flexibilities allow grantees to cover emerging expenses needed to increase services to underserved Tribal members, including through the provision of rental, food, clothing, and other emergency support.
- **Supporting Culturally Specific and Underserved Populations**: HHS awarded ARP supplemental funding to support community-based organizations that are providing culturally-specific activities and support for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence to address emergent needs resulting from the COVID-19 public health emergency. This historic investment in ARP funding created a multi-year funding source for services for survivors from underserved communities who often encounter additional barriers to accessing culturally-specific and trauma-informed services.
- **Providing Clarity on Allowable Uses of ARP Funding**: Throughout 2021 and the beginning of 2022, FVPSA Program Specialists held weekly office hours to assist grantees in the administration of their ARP funds. To further provide clarity for grantees and stakeholders, the FVPSA Program also published five Program Instruction Guidance Memos outlining the allowable uses of funds and program implementation options for all ARP grant programs—these included implementation requirements for the allocation of FVPSA subgrants to resource centers that will use their expertise, existing networks, and memberships to support survivors from underserved communities, including Tribes, Tribal organizations, LGBTQ organizations and two-spirited organizations.[136]
- **Implementing Streamlined Supplemental Funding Processes:** To quickly help ARP Grants to Support Survivors of Domestic Violence grantees be responsive to the needs of

survivors, the FVPSA Program implemented a streamlined supplemental funding process for all 296 *existing* FVPSA grantees. Grantees include states, Tribes, coalitions, children's services demonstration grants, resource centers, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the StrongHearts Native Helpline. The streamlined process allowed all current grantees to receive their supplemental funding in advance of submitting their applications. Grant recipients are still required to submit post-award documents related to the implementation of this funding, including a use of funds narrative and budget documents, among other requirements. This process enabled grantees to immediately address the most urgent program and service needs to support survivors and their children while ensuring submission of necessary documentation.

WIC Modernization (Section 1106)

Evidence shows that USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is one of the most powerful evidence-based public health interventions available, and is uniquely positioned to reduce racial disparities in maternal and child health outcomes. Racial disparities in maternal mortality are striking—American Indian/Alaska Native and Black women are about *two to three times* as likely to die from pregnancy-related complications as White women.[137] WIC plays a central role in supporting good healthcare outcomes for low-income, at-risk pregnant and postpartum women and their children.

ARP provides $390 million to carry out outreach, innovation, and program modernization efforts, including appropriate waivers and flexibility, to increase participation in and redemption of benefits. ARP funding is applicable to both WIC and the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (WIC FMNP). USDA is allocating $250 million in funding to support increased enrollment and retention, and $120 million to reduce disparities in program delivery.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Soliciting and Incorporating Feedback from Stakeholders and Program Participants, including Underserved Communities to Formulate USDA's Investment Strategy:** To formulate an investment strategy, USDA solicited and incorporated feedback from stakeholders, program participants, and underserved communities. USDA conducted over 30 listening sessions with advocates, researchers, program participants, industry partners, and state and local agencies in rural and urban areas from across the country to gather input on strategies to increase enrollment and improve the participant experience, as well as approaches for reducing disparities in program and health outcomes. USDA also partnered with the United States Digital Service (USDS) to better understand the challenges applicants experience when enrolling in WIC. The USDS research included 43 interviews with more than 75 individuals, including WIC directors from ten States, territories, and Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) and 12 local clinics in urban and rural locations.
- **Developing a Strategic Plan with Targeted Investments to Improve Equity**: USDA's Food and Nutrition Service developed a strategic plan centered on the Administration's commitments to improve health equity and child health outcomes, and reduce maternal mortality and morbidity. The investment plan divides the funds into two WIC modernization initiatives: (1) $250 million to increase enrollment and retain participants

for the full length of their eligibility and (2) $120 million to reduce disparities in program delivery. Approximately five percent is set aside to support federal costs necessary to carry out the plan.

- **Collecting Data and Feedback on Ways to Improve the Customer Experience Through Technology:** In October 2021, USDS disseminated a survey to all 89 WIC state agencies about their technology use and capacity, and in November 2021, USDA published a Request for Information (RFI) in the *Federal Register* asking for public input on the capabilities of a resource center to help state agencies improve their WIC application and certification process.[138]

Prevention and Treatment of Substance Abuse (Section 2702)

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services' Administration's (SAMHSA) Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant (SABG) allows states and territories to plan, implement, and evaluate activities to prevent, treat, and help more people recover from substance use disorder. The funding is broadly flexible and allows recipients to make investments in existing prevention, treatment, and recovery infrastructure; increase support for providers; and address unique local needs to deliver substance use disorder services.

ARP appropriated $1.5 billion to the Substance Abuse and Prevention Treatment Block Grant for awarding to states beginning in FY21 and to be expended by FY25.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Requiring Equity Strategies in State Proposals:** SAMHSA requested proposals from eligible jurisdictions to be submitted by July 2, 2021, which were then reviewed and approved by State Project Officers. State proposals included projects and activities specifically tailored to address the needs of state residents. All proposals were required by SAMHSA to identify how recipients intended to use equitable strategies to reduce disparities in the state's Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Support planning and approaches.
- **Raising Awareness Among All, Including Underserved Populations:** SAMHSA has focused explicitly on raising awareness in underserved communities and expanding access in those communities. One of the program's requirements is that grantees ensure outreach to underserved populations. In accordance with this requirement, states included in their proposals how they intended to achieve this goal. Although states have discretion in their approach, SAMHSA identified specific populations to address. These underserved populations include, but are not limited to, pregnant women, and women with dependent children; persons who inject drugs; persons using opioids and/or stimulant drugs associated with drug overdoses; persons at risk for HIV, TB, and Hepatitis; persons experiencing homelessness; persons involved in the justice system; persons involved in the child welfare system; Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); LGBTQ individuals; rural populations; and other underserved groups.
- **Identifying and Addressing Common Barriers to Access:** In an effort to expand access in underserved communities, states are working to identify common barriers that may prevent access to services. These include, but are not limited to: having culturally

sensitive approaches to outreach and service delivery, addressing provider shortages, and increasing access to social support services, such as transportation in rural communities.

- **Investing in Data and Evidence-Based Practices to Improve Outcomes:** Several states are acting to strengthen data infrastructure, expand the use of evidence-based practices, and continue to collect more information that will support future interventions.

Community-Based Mobile Crisis Intervention (Section 9813)

Mobile crisis intervention services are behavioral health services provided by specialists to a person experiencing a mental health crisis or substance use disorder (SUD) crisis at their location (e.g., at home, school, work). The teams provide services like screening, assessment, stabilization, de-escalation, and help connect individuals experiencing behavioral crises to appropriate community supports. Because the COVID-19 pandemic was associated with large increases in mental health and SUD needs and crises, ARP sought to address some of these needs through expanded mobile crisis intervention support.

ARP incentivizes states to provide community-based mobile crisis intervention services as part of their Medicaid programs for a period of up to five years, starting on April 1, 2022 and ending on March 31, 2027. The federal government is incentivizing states to provide these increased services by offering an 85 percent federal medical assistance percentage (FMAP) for qualifying expenditures during the first 12 fiscal quarters that a state participates in the program. In addition, ARP provides $15 million in grants to states to support state plan amendments or waiver requests.

Efforts to Advance Equity:

- **Providing $15 Million in Planning Grants:** The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) awarded planning grants to 20 states in September 2021.[139] These grants provide financial resources for state Medicaid agencies to assess community needs and develop programs to bring crisis intervention services directly to those experiencing a substance use-related or mental health crisis outside a hospital or facility setting. These grants will help states integrate community-based mobile crisis intervention services into their Medicaid programs, a critical component of establishing a sustainable and public health-focused crisis support network. CMS will continue to collaborate with states through technical assistance to design mobile health crisis interventions to meet the needs of Medicaid beneficiaries in their states.
- **Building a Sustainable, Equitable Funding Model:** Eligible states can receive an 85 percent federal match (FMAP) for qualifying expenditures for community-based mobile crisis intervention services for the first three years of this initiative. And, as part of new mobile crisis design, states can provide emergency services to individuals with acute behavioral health crises who would otherwise be eligible for Medicaid but for their immigration status.
- **Allowing States to Provide Mobile Crisis Services to Any *Medicaid Eligible Individual:*** In guidance to the states, CMS has specifically asked states to "be mindful to include underserved communities of color and Tribal communities," and "to consider how to meet the needs for language access for people with limited-English proficiency or those who are deaf or hard of hearing."[140] CMS has also actively encouraged states to

consider the historical discrimination faced by these groups and the mental health stigma members of these groups may have faced in the past when designing new care models and approaches. CMS will continue to consider the effectiveness of these interventions in reaching communities of color, youth, individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and older Americans, and issue additional guidance to states.

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[1] This Executive Summary is part of the larger "Advancing Equity Through the American Rescue Plan" report. For full text, see: White House. (May 2022). *Advancing Equity Through the American Rescue Plan.* Retrieved from https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/ADVANCING-EQUITY-THROUGH-THE-AMERICAN-RESCUE-PLAN.pdf

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(1) businesses enterprises that certify that they are owned and controlled by individuals who have had their access to credit on reasonable terms diminished as compared to others in comparable economic circumstances, due to their (1) membership of a group that has been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society, (2) gender, (3) veteran status, (4) limited English proficiency, (5) disability, (6) long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society, (7) membership of a federally or state-recognized Indian Tribe, (8) long-term residence in a rural community, (9) residence in a U.S. territory, (10) residence in a community undergoing economic transitions (including communities impacted by the shift

towards a net-zero economy or deindustrialization), or (11) membership of another "underserved community" as defined in Executive Order 13985;

(2) business enterprises that certify that they are owned and controlled by individuals whose residences are in Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) Investment Areas, as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 1805.201(b)(3)(ii);

(3) business enterprises that certify that they will operate a location in a CDFI Investment Area, as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 1805.201(b)(3)(ii);

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