

Essential Rights

We need a transformative shift in policy that puts people first, preserves public health and the environment, and promotes the dignity and human rights of all.

For too long the United States has considered itself separate and above international human rights agreements; our commitments to basic rights are viewed as partisan and political. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the global interconnection of nations and exposed long-standing, worldwide forms of systemic oppression, racism, and inequality. The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal, inalienable rights of all people. It is time for our country to recognize and honor these rights and ensure the basic, essential needs of all people within our own borders are met.

To safeguard these fundamental rights, the United States must ensure that all people have access to housing, safe neighborhoods, quality healthcare, including mental health care, food security, universal basic income, as well as safe, accessible, and violence-free homes and communities. Through policy and inaction, our leaders have left too many families across the country in poverty, unable to secure adequate food, affordable housing, or other basic needs. This is especially true for Black, Brown, and Latinx individuals and families who have always experienced racism or discrimination and inequitable access to economic opportunities, health services, quality schools and housing to name but a few, resulting in poverty, instability, and health disparities across the board.

The pandemic exacerbates this national failure. Dependent on schools for their basic meals, students across the state were left vulnerable to food insecurity when schools closed. The federal government's initial response favored larger employers and those already well-established in the workforce, denying relief to millions of people who were already vulnerable and suffering. The ranks of the unemployed swelled dramatically and many small businesses struggled, resulting in increased economic instability, loss of their businesses, health insurance, mounting medical and other debt. A housing crisis looms as quick fixes such as no-eviction policies, rent moratoriums and deferral on mortgage payments expire. And these are just a few examples - the devastation is everywhere.

Now more than ever, we believe that government at all levels must commit resources and make systemic changes to alleviate poverty and

RECOMMENDATIONS

- + **Pass a comprehensive Equal Rights Amendment to our state constitution** to prohibit discrimination based on a person's race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and sex including pregnancy and pregnancy outcomes, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and strikes the right balance between protecting religious freedom and anti-discrimination laws.
- + **Affirm the principles of human rights as stated in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).**
- + **All levels of government should collect uniform, disaggregated data** and analyze it through intersectional gender and racial lenses so that decision-making at all levels can take proactive measures to set priorities and target mitigation strategies.
- + **Federal, state and local governments must fund community organizations**, including racial justice, feminist and women's rights organizations, to respond to the needs of the community they serve and be represented in the decision making
- + Housing is a basic right that New York should protect by creating sustainable policies for quality, safe, and accessible housing. In the face of the pandemic. **New York State must enforce no-eviction policies, rent moratoriums and deferral on mortgage payments** to assure that people can stay in their homes.
- + **Ensure food security to all in need** especially Black and Brown children and families, elderly, unemployed, homeless populations, rural populations and immigrants through SNAP benefits, food distribution programs, food pantries and food banks etc.
- + Commit to a fully accessible system in housing, employment, transportation and healthcare to **provide reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and seniors.**
- + Continue **commitment to a subsistence replacement income for all people, especially women of color and those**

aid the millions of people who are in need of the basic services for survival. As a society we need to rebuild a strong, inclusive social safety net that includes all people living within our borders. We need a transformative shift in policy that puts people first, prioritizes economic and food security, affordable housing, public health and the environment, and promotes the dignity and human rights of all.

excluded from COVID benefits because of immigration status, and those blocked from any access to unemployment benefits.

+ Make reparations for Black people in our economic, health, education, housing and other systems.