

Mayor LaToya Cantrell & Councilmembers Moreno, Morrell, Giarusso, Harris, King, Green, and Thomas

City of New Orleans

1300 Perdido Street

New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

Delivery via electronic mail

September 13, 2022

Re: Advocates and Service Providers Support Investment in Community-Based Solutions to Build a Thriving and Safe New Orleans

Dear Mayor Cantrell and Councilmembers Moreno, Morrell, Giarusso, Harris, King, Green, and Thomas:

We the undersigned, criminal legal reform, juvenile justice, economic, environmental justice, and public health organizations urge you to allocate adequate resources in your FY2023 budget to achieve public safety in New Orleans. **As you propose how New Orleans should spend the second tranche of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars, we encourage you to invest as deeply in community-based supports that ensure public safety as you have in law enforcement and reactive responses.**

In the first tranche of ARPA funds, \$22.2M of \$193M was spent on law enforcement while none of the money was earmarked for preventative measures. Additionally, the money designated for infrastructure and alleviating the negative economic impacts of COVID has yet to be spent.¹ Balancing the allocation of resources will ensure an equitable distribution of city resources and move us closer to achieving community safety. We can use ARPA funds to do more than react to an increase in violent crime; we can proactively fund safety-building infrastructure and reinvigorate programs proven to create safety over the long-term.

A safer New Orleans is possible. To achieve safety, we strongly recommend investing ARPA dollars in programs and services like the following (this is an illustrative, inexhaustive list of worthy projects):

- 1. Community Crisis Intervention Team (\$400,060):** When funded properly, Community Violence Intervention (CVI) programs can reduce shootings and gun violence by up to 30 percent while also saving money.² The City of New Orleans should broaden its CVI programs in the Office of Gun Violence Prevention by funding full time social workers and technology for the Community Crisis Intervention Team, which visits shooting victims and their families to prevent further conflict and retaliation.
- 2. Youth-specific programming to build the skills and futures of young people and their families (\$24.35M total, divided as follows):**

- **Youth Workforce Development Programs (\$6.85M over two years):** Investment focused on increasing exposure and access to career and technical education for in-school youth, as well as a specific focus on opportunity youth and young people who interact with the juvenile justice system.
 - **STEM NOLA Hub in NO East (\$1M):** The Innovation Center envisions New Orleans as a leader for innovation, workforce, and entrepreneurship for Louisiana,³ aligning with the Youth Master Plan's goal of creating career options and training for the city's youth.⁴
 - **Capacity Building for Youth Programs (\$5M):** Support the Children Youth and Planning Board, Total Community Action, and United Way as they collaborate to support successful youth programs that are not easily discoverable by those eligible.
 - **Universal Home-Visiting Program (\$1.5M):** We applaud the proposal by the New Orleans Health Department and Office of Youth and Families to fund Family Connects, a universal home-visiting program for New Orleans families that includes a postpartum home visit for every birthing person upon discharge from the hospital.⁵
 - **Youth Development Fund (\$10M):** Creation of a fund focused on engaging opportunity youth both in school and in their neighborhoods, in collaboration with the Children and Youth Planning Board and the following organizations: Operation Restoration, Youth Empowerment Project, ALAS, Daughters Beyond Incarceration, Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children, Center for Restorative Justice, Roots of Music, New Orleans Youth Alliance, and Louisiana Center for Children's Rights.
3. **Affordable Housing (\$65M):** Connecting the unhoused to immediate stable housing, not jail or prison, is the most efficient, cost effective, and just solution to the quality-of-life problem in the City of New Orleans.⁶ We urge you to allocate funds for building permanently affordable housing units, developing and converting hotels to non-congregate shelters, and expanding wrap-around and supportive services for residents living in non-congregate shelters.
4. **A community-based continuum of mental health care to improve public safety (\$10M):** The City of New Orleans should invest in the community-based continuum of mental health care that it lost when Charity Hospital closed after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Today, our jails and emergency rooms are overburdened with mental health care, and police are the City's first mental health responders, which is not their job.⁷ The continuum should include non-police responses to mental health calls such as the city's new Alternative Dispatch (AD) program, which can be safer and more effective than police responses.⁸ Other recommended investments include a 24/7 walk-in and drop-off care facility for people in crisis (without risk of incarceration or a trip to the emergency room), a crisis stabilization center to offer 5-7 day stays and connections to necessary services, and residential care that provides access to longer-term (30-60 day) care.⁹

5. A community grant fund designed to build up strong, safe communities (\$10M): To prevent violence, New Orleans needs more than police to build safety. Data consistently shows that increasing police budgets has no meaningful impact on crime rates.¹⁰ The City of New Orleans should establish a community grant fund for investments such as improved lighting, connected sidewalks, repaired streets, safe parks, and community centers that community members and organizations have collectively determined will ensure a safe and thriving neighborhood.¹¹

Equitable investment in preventative and community-led solutions to violence is an investment in our youth, our residents, our neighborhoods, and our safety. We urge you to take this opportunity to invest in the future of all New Orleanians.

Signed,

ALAS	New Orleans Youth Alliance
Café Reconcile	Orleans Public Defenders
Center for Restorative Approaches	Our Voice Nuestra Voz
Daughters Beyond Incarceration	People’s DA Coalition
Dillard University’s Center for Racial Justice	Power Coalition
Eye on Surveillance	Promise of Justice Initiative
First 72+	Rethink NOLA
Friends and Family of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children	Roots of Music
Imagine Water Works	Southern Poverty Law Center
Innocence Project New Orleans	Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund
Isaiah Institute of New Orleans	St. Charles Center for Faith + Action
Justice and Accountability Center	Ubuntu Village
Liberation Collective/Community Safety Coalition	Vera Institute of Justice
Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights	Violence Prevention Institute at Tulane University
Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center	Voice of the Experienced
Louisiana Public Health Institute	Voters Organized to Educate
	Women With a Vision

¹ City of New Orleans Department of Finance, “American Rescue Plan & Financial Reports,” June 1, 2022, <https://nola.gov/finance/american-rescue-plan-financial-reports/#:~:text=Therefore%2C%20the%20City%20of%20New,balances%20for%20FY2021%20through%20FY2024>).

² Cure Violence Global, *The Evidence of Effectiveness* (Chicago: Cure Violence Global, 2021), <https://perma.cc/5594-86FP>; Nazish Dholakia and Daniela Gilbert, “Community Violence Intervention Programs, Explained,” Vera Institute of Justice, September 1, 2021, <https://perma.cc/2ADY-25VJ>.

³ Della Hasselle, “A \$10M education hub and global reach: STEM NOLA has come a long way from Saturdays in the garage,” *The Times-Picayune/The New Orleans Advocate*, March 11, 2021, <https://perma.cc/8B8N-KLRG>.

⁴ Children & Youth Planning Board (CYPB), the Mayor’s Office of Youth and Families (OYF), and the New Orleans Youth Alliance

(NOYA), “New Orleans Youth Master Plan,” OPSB Presentation, September 23, 2021, <https://perma.cc/7SSJ-LU2B>.

⁵ City of New Orleans, Health Department, “2022 Goals”, *2022 City Council Budget Hearing*, p. 26, November 15, 2021, <https://perma.cc/5YMQ-U95Q>.

⁶ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), “Health Equity: Permanent Supportive Housing with Housing First (Housing First Programs),” *Guide to Community Preventive Services*, 2019, <https://perma.cc/7G4E-42KJ>.

⁷ Heather D’Antonio, “The State of Mental Health Care in Post-Katrina New Orleans,” *Louisiana Law Review*, Vol. 63, No. 29, Spring 2009, <https://perma.cc/9DEJ-GU4B>.

⁸ Nazish Dholakia, “The People Responding to 911 Calls Instead of Police,” Vera Institute of Justice, April 2022, <https://perma.cc/85EU-ZS7J>.

⁹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “National Guidelines for Behavioral Health Crisis Care: Best Practice Toolkit,” 2020, <https://perma.cc/H8K2-L2C6>.

¹⁰ Philip Bump, “Over the Past 60 Years, More Spending on Police Hasn’t Necessarily Meant Less Crime,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2020, <https://perma.cc/6XG7-FSN9>.

¹¹ James Lasley, “Designing Out Gang Homicides and Street Assaults,” National Institute of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice), November 1998, <https://perma.cc/UG8F-JPQK>; Aaron Chafin et al., “Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Street Lighting in New York City,” Crime Lab New York (University of Chicago Urban Labs), April 24, 2019, <https://perma.cc/J76X-A75X>.