



National  
Urban League

**REPORT**

# **21 Pillars** **for Redefining** **Public Safety** **and Restoring** **Community Trust**

## ABOUT EQUITABLE JUSTICE & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The National Urban League's Equitable Justice & Strategic Initiatives Division (EJSI) was created in response to the social justice uprising of 2020 to lead our efforts in areas of civic engagement, census and redistricting, voting rights, criminal justice reform, ending gun violence, combating extremism, and more. Under the leadership of our President and CEO Marc H. Morial, EJSI was established in September 2020 and quickly mobilized League resources to respond to the need to increase the National Urban League's advocacy on justice issues on the national, state, and local levels.

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## LETTER FROM NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE PRESIDENT & CEO



In 2020, fissures in American policing erupted and the public demanded attention and action to end injustice. The National Urban League developed its *21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust*, offering a path forward for meaningful change that affirms that Black Lives Matter.

The acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer in 2013 gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. Since then, thousands of Americans have died at the hands of police with Black people six times more likely to be killed. We need answers. We need relief.

When police officers killed George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the world rallied and marched in protest and in solidarity, seeking an end to the senseless loss of Black lives at the hands of those sworn to protect and serve. The murder conviction of officer Derek Chauvin delivered personal accountability for one officer's behavior. Now, we seek justice by redefining the systems that encourage that behavior.

The Pillars are for the community, by the community. Our framework has been developed with deep engagement with our network of 91 affiliates, as well as activists, political leaders, public safety experts, advocates, and legislators. I am proud to share that our Pillars reject the status quo of policing of old and reimagine a national public safety standard that transforms safety culture in a systematic way.

Five key themes outline the change we need and are explained throughout this booklet. We encourage you to use this comprehensive framework as a blueprint for your advocacy on the local, state, and national level.

- 01 Collaborating with communities to build a restorative system
- 02 Demanding accountability
- 03 Changing divisive policing policies
- 04 Requiring transparency, reporting and data collection
- 05 Improving hiring standards and training

The National Urban League cannot fully realize its mission and vision amid the current state of policing. The effects of unjust policing often reverberate beyond the criminal justice system, undermining social progress. We created the *21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust* to present firm and straight-forward solutions that can guide us to a future where public safety allows all people to feel safe.

**Marc H. Morial**  
President & CEO  
National Urban League

# Preamble

The National Urban League's **21 PILLARS** is a comprehensive framework for advocacy that redefines public safety and restores community trust—paving a way beyond the status quo. Our forward-thinking plan centers on five key themes that are fundamental to the protection and preservation of life, dignity, and trust, while also building safer communities.

We recognize that, first and foremost, community trust must be restored for true change to occur through truth, reconciliation, and empowerment (Theme 01). Community trust goes hand-in-hand with accountability for those who have a duty and authority to protect and serve (Theme 02). We must work from the inside out to redesign public safety by uprooting divisive policing policies (Theme 03). Finally, though we recognize that change takes time, it also takes attention to detail and learning. Therefore, we advocate for transparency, reporting standards, and data collection (Theme 04). Standards for hiring, evaluation, and promotions in public safety must be refined and enhanced. (Theme 05). Public safety must be transformed, structurally and fundamentally.

For too long the lives, safety, and freedom of communities around the nation, particularly Black communities, have been threatened by discriminatory and violent policing. Our communities deserve to feel safe in their homes, in their cars, and on their streets, including safe from police violence. The 21 Pillars is a vision of what is possible—a path forward. Public safety must be re-envisioned.

The effects of unjust policing often reverberate beyond the criminal justice system, undermining social progress. The 21 Pillars take a holistic approach to public safety, the restoration of trust between communities and law enforcement, and a path forward for meaningful change. We encourage you to utilize our framework as a tool for your advocacy work on the ground—from grassroots organizing, to the legislative halls of government in cities and states, to the U.S. Capitol.

Since 1910, the National Urban League has promoted economic empowerment and equity through education and job training, housing and community development, workforce development, entrepreneurship, health, and quality of life. Yet social parity, economic empowerment, and civil rights cannot be achieved in a world of unjust policing. Our *21 Pillars for Redefining Public Safety and Restoring Community Trust* present solutions that will move us closer to a world where community safety is real, and not aspirational.

**Key Themes**

- 01 COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITIES TO BUILD A RESTORATIVE SYSTEM**
- 02 ACCOUNTABILITY**
- 03 CHANGE DIVISIVE POLICING POLICIES**
- 04 REQUIRE TRANSPARENCY, REPORTING & DATA COLLECTION**
- 05 IMPROVE HIRING STANDARDS & TRAINING**



# Collaborate with Communities to Build a Restorative System

Theme **01**



The first theme addresses the core of policing: public safety must serve the people. Currently, the system inspires safety for some and doubt for others. This theme aims to lift the veil, to expose the truth about policing in America, to empower communities to engage richly in the policymaking process, and to lay the groundwork for community reinvestment. Find the truth: identify the bad policies. Expose the truth: engage with the public to address them. Resolve the truth: new policy must replace old policy to move on from the status quo.

**PILLAR 01**

**EMPOWER COMMUNITIES TO RE-ENVISION PUBLIC SAFETY IN AN EQUITABLE AND JUST WAY**

Truth and Reconciliation: Find justice for over-policed communities by studying the complex and long history of racism and policing in the United States and leveraging findings to draw policy that [reconciles the past with the present and future](#).<sup>1</sup>

Reinvest in our communities by supporting and funding asset-based approaches such as [cure violence model program](#)<sup>2</sup> and [restorative justice](#)<sup>3</sup> programs, and social services that build upon existing assets and that address fundamental needs, including stable and safe housing, food, and job insecurity. Reinvest in our communities by supporting and funding the expansion of, and equitable access to, an excellent education and substance misuse and mental health and wellness services.

Change the culture of law enforcement response to crises by reorganizing response units.

Establish [public safety innovation grants](#) for community-based organizations to create local commissions and task forces to help communities to re-imagine and develop concrete, just, and equitable public safety approaches.<sup>4</sup>



**PILLAR 02**

**END BROKEN WINDOWS POLICING AND IMPLEMENT COMMUNITY POLICING MODEL**

Decriminalize and/or establish diversionary programs for low-level offenses, including drug possession, public intoxication, loitering, jaywalking, disorderly conduct, and sex work. [Shift police time](#) and public resources from these arrest-focused activities.<sup>5</sup>

Emphasize prevention and problem-solving over [ticket and arrest quotas and criminalization](#).<sup>6</sup>

Reimagine evaluation metrics for officers to focus ratings on community engagement, community feedback, and social service referral, in addition to safety and case resolution metrics.

Require collaboration with community members on decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of recruitment and hiring, training, and all departmental policies, practices, and priorities.

Establish community solutions by [conditioning federal funding](#) to state and local law enforcement.<sup>7</sup>



**PILLAR 03**

**PROHIBIT PROFILING BASED ON RACE, ETHNICITY, RELIGION, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, DISABILITY, OR IMMIGRATION STATUS**

Codify antidiscrimination policies at the state and local level.<sup>8</sup>

Require the development of written bias-free policing policies with community input that provide guidance on [bias-free policing](#),<sup>9</sup> implicit bias, cultural competency, and [procedural justice](#).<sup>10</sup> The policies must include [actual as well as perceived personal characteristics](#).<sup>11</sup>

[Condition federal funding](#) to state and local law enforcement to adopt policies to combat and discourage racial, religious, and discriminatory profiling.<sup>12</sup>

**PILLAR 04**

**ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS EXPERIENCING MENTAL HEALTH CRISES**

Invest in [comprehensive crisis response programs](#) that are responsive to overlapping public health and safety concerns.<sup>13</sup>

Establish state and local mental health and wellness advisory groups, staffed by safety personnel, social workers, and mental health providers.

Require [crisis intervention](#) and de-escalation training for all officers, first responders, and public-facing staff.<sup>14</sup>

# Accountability

Theme **02**

We must hold our agents of public safety and the system to which they belong to a high standard of public accountability. For us, that means holding individual officers accountable in the court of law for behavior that violates their oath and finding justice by changing the culture that promotes or encourages dangerous patterns and practices. Theme 02 uproots the culture from the outside-in. You'll see later that Theme 03 uproots the culture from the inside-out.



**PILLAR 05**

◀ **HOLD POLICE ACCOUNTABLE IN COURT**

End [qualified immunity](#) for law enforcement. Close the open legal questions that shield officers from accountability when they violate a civilian's constitutional rights.<sup>15</sup>

Amend the federal criminal statute to change the mens rea requirement in federal law—[18 U.S.C. Section 242](#)<sup>16</sup>— from "willfulness" to a "recklessness" standard to allow appropriate prosecution of an officer.

Make it a crime for a federal law enforcement officer to engage in a sexual act with an individual who is under arrest, in detention, or in custody. [Prohibit consent](#) as a defense to prosecution for unlawful conduct. Incentivize states to set the same standards.<sup>17</sup>

**PILLAR 07**

**INVESTIGATE POLICE MISCONDUCT**

Appoint fair and impartial [special prosecutors](#) to investigate police misconduct.<sup>21</sup>

Fully utilize the use of [pattern and practice investigations](#) of police departments. Grant the Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division subpoena power and enhance funding for such investigations.<sup>22</sup>

Establish a DOJ task force to coordinate the investigation, prosecution, and enforcement efforts of federal, state, and local governments in cases related to law enforcement misconduct.

On the state level, create a grant program for state attorneys general to develop authority to conduct independent investigations into problematic police departments.

**PILLAR 08**

**CREATE OR STRENGTHEN INDEPENDENT ALL-CIVILIAN COMMUNITY-BASED REVIEW BOARDS WITH FINAL AUTHORITY**

Create diverse [community-based review](#) boards that receive, investigate, and resolve all civil complaints of police misconduct.<sup>23</sup>

Require all review boards, police departments, and other law enforcement agencies to abide by a [uniform discipline matrix](#) with standardized penalties.<sup>24</sup>

Ensure boards have adequate funding and subpoena and [administrative prosecutorial powers](#) that will enable them to investigate complaints, advise on needed policy changes, and serve as the final determinant on officer discipline thoroughly and independently.<sup>25</sup>

**PILLAR 06**

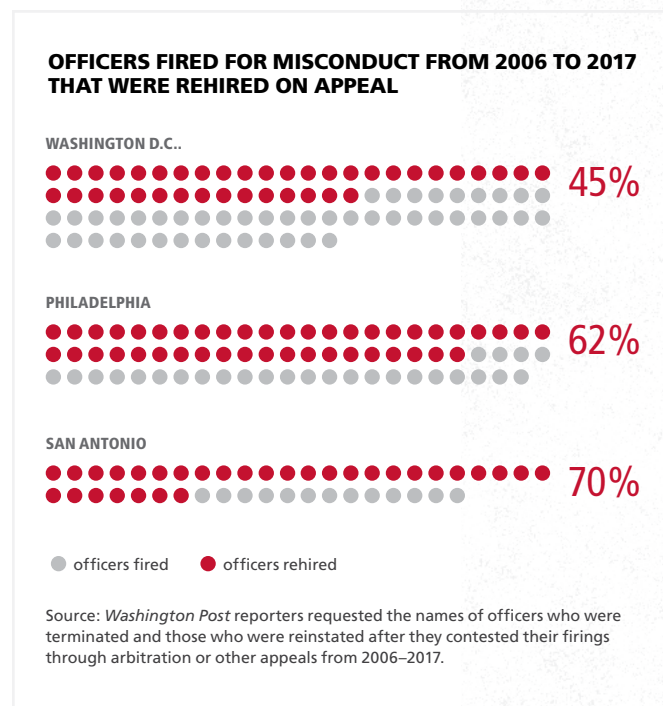
**PREVENT POLICE UNION CONTRACTS FROM BLOCKING ACCOUNTABILITY**

Remove all [disciplinary matters](#) from the scope of [police union contract negotiations](#).<sup>18</sup>

Require community representation at police union contract negotiations.

At the state level, repeal "[Police Bill of Rights](#)" laws.<sup>19</sup>

Stop [police union influence](#) over politics by limiting political contributions from police unions.<sup>20</sup>



# Change Divisive Police Policies

## Theme 03

Policing culture is codified by the statutes, policy manuals, patrol guides, and attitudes that encourage it. Theme 03 changes the rules that dictate how the agents of public safety behave. Limit use of force. Remove police from schools. Take away the tanks, armor, and weapons meant for war. End the culture of civil forfeiture. Theme 03 uproots the culture from the inside-out.



**PILLAR 10**  
**BAN CHOKEHOLDS, NO-KNOCK WARRANTS & SHOOTING AT MOVING VEHICLES**  
Ban the following uses of force: [chokeholds and carotid holds](#), [no-knock warrants](#), and [shooting at moving vehicles](#).<sup>30</sup>  
[Condition law enforcement funding](#) for state and local governments banning chokeholds and carotid holds, no-knock warrants, and shooting at moving vehicles.<sup>31</sup>



**PILLAR 11**  
**ELIMINATE POLICE FROM SCHOOLS**  
Break the [school-to-prison pipeline](#) by removing police officers from schools in deep and ongoing consultation with students, teachers, and families.<sup>32</sup>  
Train all building staff to be able to [de-escalate and handle disruptive behavior](#) in school, including administrative staff, custodial staff, and paraprofessionals.<sup>33</sup>  
Staff schools with appropriate human and social service professionals such as counselors, youth development specialists, social workers, mental health and wellness practitioners, community interventionists, and [restorative justice coordinators](#).<sup>34</sup>

**PILLAR 12**  
**DEMILITARIZE THE POLICE FORCE**  
Limit the [transfer of military-grade equipment](#) to state and local law enforcement and encourage the return to the federal government military equipment already received.<sup>35</sup>  
[Restrict local and state police departments](#) from purchasing or utilizing military weapons.<sup>36</sup>

**PILLAR 13**  
**BAN CIVIL ASSET FORFEITURE**  
Prohibit law enforcement from [seizing property and cash](#) from an individual unless the person is convicted of a crime and the state establishes by clear and convincing evidence that the property is subject to forfeiture.<sup>37</sup>  
Stop permitting and incentivizing local and state police to engage in civil asset forfeiture by ending the federal [Equitable Sharing program](#).<sup>38</sup>



# Require Transparency, Reporting & Data Collection

Theme **04**

Theme 04 acknowledges the reality that we need data to make lasting changes to our systems. Our country has 18,000 police departments and no national data collection standard for how police behave in our communities. We envision a public safety system that collects data on police misconduct and use-of-force, collects and analyzes video and audio evidence, audits police budgets, and serves as a check for the privacy concerns of the community. This data will inspire the policy changes of the future.

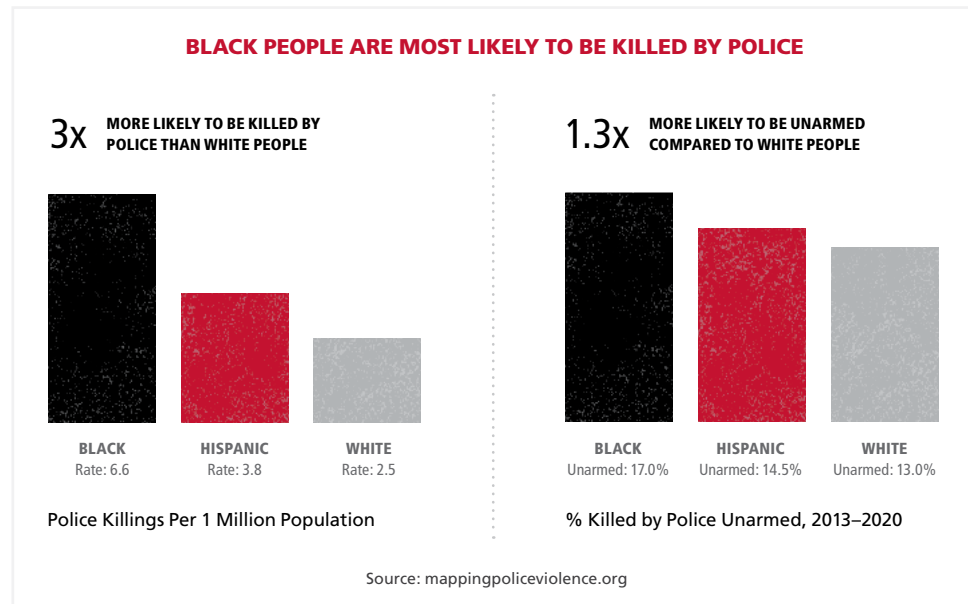
**PILLAR 14**

**COLLECT DATA ON POLICE MISCONDUCT AND USE-OF-FORCE**

Create and audit a national [citizen database of complaints against police](#), which examines patterns in complaint investigations, including patterns in the quality of investigations, findings, and discipline rendered.<sup>39</sup>

Develop a [national police misconduct registry](#)<sup>40</sup> that includes [use of excessive force](#),<sup>41</sup> racial profiling, sexual assault, assault, perjury, falsifying a police report, and planting or destroying evidence, to prevent problematic officers who are fired or leave one agency from moving to another jurisdiction without any accountability.

Require the Attorney General to collect data on investigatory actions and detentions by federal law enforcement agencies, the racial distribution of drug charges, the [use of deadly force](#) by and against law enforcement officers, and traffic and pedestrian stops and detentions.<sup>42</sup>



**Pillar 14 (cont.)**

[Mandate uniform FBI reporting](#) and audit of lethal force incidents involving any law enforcement officer.<sup>43</sup>

Require state and local law enforcement agencies to report use of force data, [disaggregated by race](#), sex, disability, religion, and age.<sup>44</sup>

**PILLAR 15**

**MANDATE USE OF DASHBOARD AND BODY-WORN CAMERAS AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO FOOTAGE**

Require all federal police officers to [wear functioning body-worn cameras](#) and all federal law enforcement vehicles to have functioning dashboard cameras.<sup>45</sup>

Create uniform and national standards for the use and activation of body-worn and dashboard cameras, and [direct access](#) to footage for relevant prosecutorial and oversight bodies.

Prohibit footage tampering and unauthorized access to recorded footage.<sup>46</sup>

Require state and local law enforcement to use existing federal funds to ensure the universal use of police body-worn and dashboard cameras.

**PILLAR 16**

**CONDUCT FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL AUDITS OF POLICE DEPARTMENTS**

Require regular and publicly available [audits](#) covering operations, budget, management, staffing structures, and policies and procedures.<sup>47</sup>

**PILLAR 17**

**REQUIRE TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNITY INPUT WITH PREDICTIVE POLICING, FACIAL RECOGNITION AND ANY NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

Mandate community input and independent assessment of potential biases before law enforcement deploys any predictive policing or [facial recognition technology](#), and require community input on the implementation of any policing technologies.<sup>48</sup>

Ensure policing technologies' impact on privacy concerns is in accordance with constitutional safeguards.

# Improve Hiring Standards & Training

Theme **05**



Our public safety system is only as strong and representative as the agents it employs. We deserve high quality officers who meet and exceed high standards and reflect the communities that they serve. It's simple: good officers should be honored and promoted. Those who abuse the public trust, should not. Public safety departments should prove that they are effective by seeking periodic accreditation and should be required to maintain accreditation to ensure their policies keep their communities safe. Theme 05 completes the feedback loop for redefining public safety and restoring community trust.

**PILLAR 18**

**ADOPT A NATIONAL POLICE ACCREDITATION SYSTEM**

Adopt and implement a [national police accreditation system](#) with evidence-based conditions of accreditation.<sup>49</sup>

[Condition law enforcement funding](#) for local and state governments on jurisdictions meeting accreditation requirements.<sup>50</sup>

**PILLAR 19**

**EXPAND THE NATIONAL DECERTIFICATION INDEX**

Track all decertified police officers and officers who have been fired or resigned due to police misconduct by expanding the [National Decertification Index](#) to cover all law enforcement agencies and include officers who have been fired or resigned due to police misconduct.

Require [the use of the National Decertification Index](#) in making hiring decisions to prevent officers who have been fired or resigned due to misconduct from being [rehired in another jurisdiction](#).<sup>51</sup>

[Condition law enforcement funding](#) for local and state governments on jurisdictions using and contributing to the Index.<sup>52</sup>

**PILLAR 20**

**STRENGTHEN POLICE HIRING STANDARDS AND IMPROVE TRAINING TO BUILD INTEGRITY AND TRUST**

Develop police recruiting and [hiring standard recommendations](#) that include comprehensive work and criminal history, and encourage other checks such as polygraph tests and psychologist interviews.<sup>53</sup>

Invest in periodic and rigorous [police training](#) that emphasizes the preservation of life and includes training in peer intervention, crisis intervention or critical response training, de-escalation and use of force training, [procedural justice](#),<sup>54</sup> and implicit bias training.<sup>55</sup>

**PILLAR 21**

**INCREASE DIVERSITY & EQUITY IN BOTH THE LEADERSHIP AND RANKS OF LOCAL, STATE & FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT**

Create a workforce that contains a [broad range of diversity](#) including race, gender, language, life experience, and cultural background to improve understanding and effectiveness in dealing with all communities.<sup>56</sup>

Implement best practices for recruitment, training, and outreach to improve the diversity as well as the cultural and linguistic responsiveness of law enforcement agencies.



# NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE AFFILIATES

<b>Akron, Ohio</b> Akron Community Service Center & Urban League	<b>Chicago, Illinois</b> Chicago Urban League	<b>Grand Rapids, Michigan</b> Grand Rapids Urban League	<b>Madison, Wisconsin</b> Urban League of Greater Madison	<b>Philadelphia, Pennsylvania</b> Urban League of Philadelphia	<b>Stamford, Connecticut</b> Urban League of Southern Connecticut
<b>Alexandria, Virginia</b> Northern Virginia Urban League	<b>Cincinnati, Ohio</b> Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio	<b>Greenville, South Carolina</b> Urban League of the Upstate, Inc.	<b>Memphis, Tennessee</b> Memphis Urban League	<b>Phoenix, Arizona</b> Greater Phoenix Urban League	<b>Tacoma, Washington</b> Tacoma Urban League
<b>Alton, Illinois</b> Madison County Urban League	<b>Cleveland, Ohio</b> Urban League of Greater Cleveland	<b>Hartford, Connecticut</b> Urban League of Greater Hartford	<b>Miami, Florida</b> Urban League of Greater Miami	<b>Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania</b> Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh	<b>Tallahassee, Florida</b> Tallahassee Urban League
<b>Atlanta, Georgia</b> Urban League of Greater Atlanta	<b>Columbia, South Carolina</b> Columbia Urban League	<b>Houston, Texas</b> Houston Area Urban League	<b>Milwaukee, Wisconsin</b> Milwaukee Urban League	<b>Portland, Oregon</b> Urban League of Portland	<b>Tampa, Florida</b> Urban League of Hillsborough County, Inc.
<b>Aurora, Illinois</b> Quad County Urban League	<b>Columbus, Georgia</b> Urban League of Greater Columbus, Inc.	<b>Indianapolis, Indiana</b> Indianapolis Urban League	<b>Minneapolis, Minnesota</b> Minneapolis Urban League	<b>Providence, Rhode Island</b> Urban League of Rhode Island, Inc.	<b>Tucson, Arizona</b> Tucson Urban League
<b>Austin, Texas</b> Austin Area Urban League	<b>Columbus, Ohio</b> Columbus Urban League	<b>Jackson, Mississippi</b> Mississippi Urban League	<b>Morristown, New Jersey</b> Morris County Urban League	<b>Racine, Wisconsin</b> Urban League of Racine & Kenosha, Inc.	<b>Tulsa, Oklahoma</b> Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League
<b>Baltimore, Maryland</b> Greater Baltimore Urban League	<b>Denver, Colorado</b> Urban League of Metropolitan Denver	<b>Jacksonville, Florida</b> Jacksonville Urban League	<b>Nashville, Tennessee</b> Urban League of Middle Tennessee	<b>Rochester, New York</b> Urban League of Rochester	<b>Warren, Ohio</b> Greater Warren-Youngstown Urban League
<b>Battle Creek, Michigan</b> Southwestern Michigan Urban League	<b>Detroit, Michigan</b> Urban League of Detroit & Southeastern Michigan	<b>Jersey City, New Jersey</b> Urban League of Hudson County	<b>New Orleans, Louisiana</b> Urban League of Louisiana	<b>Sacramento, California</b> Greater Sacramento Urban League	<b>Washington, D.C.</b> Greater Washington Urban League
<b>Binghamton, New York</b> Broome County Urban League	<b>Elizabeth, New Jersey</b> Urban League of Union County	<b>Kansas City, Missouri</b> Urban League of Greater Kansas City	<b>New York, New York</b> New York Urban League	<b>Saint Louis, Missouri</b> Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis	<b>West Palm Beach, Florida</b> Urban League of Palm Beach County, Inc.
<b>Birmingham, Alabama</b> Birmingham Urban League	<b>Elyria, Ohio</b> Lorain County Urban League	<b>Knoxville, Tennessee</b> Knoxville Area Urban League	<b>Newark, New Jersey</b> Urban League of Essex County	<b>Saint Petersburg, Florida</b> Pinellas County Urban League	<b>White Plains, New York</b> Urban League of Westchester County
<b>Boston, Massachusetts</b> Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts	<b>Englewood, New Jersey</b> Urban League for Bergen County	<b>Las Vegas, Nevada</b> Las Vegas-Clark County Urban League	<b>Norfolk, Virginia</b> Urban League of Hampton Roads, Inc.	<b>San Diego, California</b> Urban League of San Diego County	<b>Wichita, Kansas</b> Urban League of Kansas, Inc.
<b>Buffalo, New York</b> Buffalo Urban League	<b>Farrell, Pennsylvania</b> Shenango Valley Urban League	<b>Lexington, Kentucky</b> Urban League of Lexington-Fayette County	<b>Oklahoma City, Oklahoma</b> Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City	<b>San Francisco, California</b> Urban League of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area	<b>Wilmington, Delaware</b> Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League
<b>Canton, Ohio</b> Greater Stark County Urban League, Inc.	<b>Flint, Michigan</b> Urban League of Flint	<b>Little Rock, Arkansas</b> The Urban League of the State of Arkansas	<b>Omaha, Nebraska</b> Urban League of Nebraska, Inc.	<b>Seattle, Washington</b> Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle	<b>Winston-Salem, North Carolina</b> Winston-Salem Urban League
<b>Charleston, South Carolina</b> Charleston Trident Urban League	<b>Fort Lauderdale, Florida</b> Urban League of Broward County	<b>Long Island, New York</b> Urban League of Long Island, Inc.	<b>Orlando, Florida</b> Central Florida Urban League	<b>Springfield, Illinois</b> Springfield Urban League, Inc.	
<b>Charlotte, North Carolina</b> Urban League of Central Carolinas, Inc.	<b>Fort Wayne, Indiana</b> Fort Wayne Urban League	<b>Los Angeles, California</b> Los Angeles Urban League	<b>Peoria, Illinois</b> Tri-County Urban League	<b>Springfield, Massachusetts</b> Urban League of Springfield	
<b>Chattanooga, Tennessee</b> Urban League of Greater Chattanooga, Inc.	<b>Gary, Indiana</b> Urban League of Northwest Indiana, Inc.	<b>Louisville, Kentucky</b> Louisville Urban League			

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