

## Letter to the Transition Teams of Massachusetts Governor-Elect Healey and Lt. Governor-Elect Driscoll

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December 23, 2022

The Honorable Governor-Elect Maura Healey  
The Honorable Lieutenant Governor-Elect Kim Driscoll  
The Transition Committees of Healey-Driscoll for Massachusetts

To the Transition Committees of Healey-Driscoll for Massachusetts:

To create a more equitable society, we believe the business community has a responsibility to act. In October 2020, 100+ organizations came together and launched CEO Action for Racial Equity (“CEOARE”), a Fellowship dedicated to advancing racial equity through public policy. On behalf of CEOARE, we congratulate Governor-elect Maura Healey and Lieutenant Governor-elect Kim Driscoll on their historic election, and we look forward to working together with the new administration on its bold vision for the people of Massachusetts.

At CEOARE, we focus on four key areas to help abate longstanding societal racial disparities in certain areas – education, healthcare, economic empowerment, and public safety – with the goal of improving well-being in the Black community and impacting society at large. By collaborating with nonprofit organizations, academics, community leaders, and decision makers, we are able to share, co-create, and help improve policies that can close deeply rooted gaps faced by Black Americans.

While the business community continues to foster its commitment to societal racial justice, we endeavor to advance societal issues through definitive action in order to truly break the cycle of systemic racism. It is crucial to learn from the past and essential to turn that knowledge into action. Where momentum exists, we are building on it. And where ground has not yet been broken, our coalition supports policies at the federal, state, and local levels that advance racial equity, address social injustice, and improve societal well-being for long-term impact.

We know that collectively the business community can advance equity for the more than 47 million Black Americans and help end systemic racism by working in collaboration with grassroots organizations and communities. As the Healey-Driscoll Administration takes shape, CEOARE recommends that the Transition Committees prioritize the following areas that can have a lasting impact in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### Jobs and a Flourishing Economy for All Committee

#### *Expanding Economic Opportunity through CDFIs*

Without access to affordable financial services, many Black Americans cannot access affordable homes, capital to start businesses, or opportunities to build credit.

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) provide a critical on-ramp to these services. There are more than 1,300 certified CDFIs across the country<sup>[1]</sup> with



nearly three dozen in Massachusetts.<sup>[2]</sup> *We urge the new administration to prioritize small business support, including access to capital and procurement opportunities through the Healey-Driscoll Administration's proposed Office of Economic Assistance.*

#### *Destigmatizing Reentry through Fair Chance Hiring*

The criminal justice system impacts the Black community more than any other group, accounting for up to 43% of those in pretrial detention despite constituting only 12% of the total U.S. population.<sup>[3]</sup> Individuals with involvement in the justice system often face stigmatization and discrimination, which can hinder their prospects for employment. Consequently, a cycle of instability, unemployment, and often, reoffending can be created. *We encourage the new administration to expand the number of reentry support programs, like the pilot program at The School of Reentry at the Boston Pre-Release Center.*

#### *Expanding Beyond Supplier Diversity to a Business Diversity Ecosystem*

CEOARE is committed to advancing an innovative approach through a racial equity lens that expands beyond the traditional procurement cycle into professional services; centers the Black-owned business experience; and provides tools, resources, leading practices, and networking opportunities to accelerate learning and improve success. *We hope the new administration will apply a similar lens to the Operational Services Division, expanding support programs for minority-owned businesses.*

### Thriving Youth and Young Adults Committee

#### *Closing the Digital Divide*

High-quality internet access, affordability, and adoption are longstanding problems that disproportionately affect Black Americans, and the pandemic only exasperated those issues. *We encourage the Healey-Driscoll administration to prioritize funding to offset broadband costs for families through the existing Affordable Connectivity Program and project planning for the expansion of high-speed internet access in MassHousing properties.*

#### *Equity and Excellence in Early Childhood Education*

Every dollar spent on high-quality, birth-to-five programs for children can deliver an annual 13% return on investment<sup>[4]</sup> from better education and health outcomes for children, employment gains for parents, greater economic productivity, and reduced spending on healthcare and crime. *We believe a director-level position dedicated to overseeing racial equity within the Executive Office of Education establishes accountability and provides guidance to the executional plans for budget distribution in communities.* Other states like Vermont have developed a similar leadership role to manage and oversee the statewide collection of race-based data in early childhood education facilities. *Additional early childhood education areas that we support include the inclusion of loan forgiveness incentives, operational grants, and implicit bias training for providers.*



## Safe and Healthy Communities for All Ages Committee

### *A Path Toward Greater Food Equity*

Black Americans experience food insecurity at twice the rate of white households.<sup>[5]</sup> As disparities widen, access to healthy food is crucial. In July 2022, CEOARE sent a letter to the Budget Conference Committee, in support of line items related to public healthcare programs, including a Common Application for all needs-based benefits like SNAP. As the new administration develops its food equity priorities, we hope to see *an expanded focus in healthy food access, eligibility and participation, and data-driven solutions.*

### *Expanding Access to Telehealth*

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of healthcare, but we must take steps to enable equitable access for Black Americans. We believe that building permanence into telehealth expansion policies has the potential to improve the Black community's access to healthcare and combat existing disparities if equity is prioritized in policy development. *We applaud the Healey-Driscoll Administration's commitment to expand access to telehealth services by increasing access to free and low-cost internet services to reach underserved patients.*

### *Racism: A Public Health Crisis*

A growing body of research shows that centuries of societal racism have had a profoundly negative impact on Black Americans' morbidity, mortality, and quality of life — and have resulted in unequal access to a range of social and economic benefits. One way that policymakers have attempted to ameliorate this problem has been through their declaration that racism is a public health crisis. In fact, more than 250 municipalities and states, including 19 cities and towns across the Commonwealth,<sup>[6]</sup> have declared racism as a public health a crisis. Declarations not only acknowledge historical injustices, but also help to more clearly define steps to address the root cause of inequities across social determinants of health. *We urge the new administration to continue its support of legislative priorities that seek to eliminate these disparities by investing in critical public health organizations that are on the frontlines.*

### *Advancing Transparency and Accountability in our Law Enforcement System*

Transparency and accountability are foundational to protecting all residents, building trust between law enforcement and community members and confirming the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions. CEOARE recently published a report, "Advancing Transparency and Accountability: A Framework for a Law Enforcement Officer Accountability Database,"<sup>[7]</sup> which introduces our suggested framework for the design of law enforcement databases that chronicle disciplinary records. In December 2022, we submitted written testimony to the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) in support of the proposed regulations for its public facing database, but also recommended measures to help improve the integrity of the data collected. Our recommendations include making publicly available the demographic information of the complainant and the officer, along with



legal settlement costs, judgments and fees of misconduct cases. We also recommend establishing regularly scheduled audits and a clear, record retention policy for database records.

*Removing Barriers for Individuals to Get to Work by Eliminating Debt-Based Driver's License Suspensions*

Current Massachusetts law allows for the suspension of a driver's license for non-motor vehicle-related causes, such as child support and state tax non-payments.<sup>[8]</sup> Suspending driver's licenses for unpaid fines and fees makes it harder for individuals to get or maintain a job, since many jobs require a driver's license as a condition of employment.<sup>[9]</sup> These suspensions in turn impact earnings and salaries, and can create a continual cycle of hardship. *We encourage the Administration to consider this and other policies that may impact an individual's ability to get and maintain a job.*

On behalf of CEOARE, we look forward to working with you and your respective transition teams on these issues.

Sincerely,  
CEO Action for Racial Equity

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## Citations

[1] Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), "What is a CDFI?", <https://www.ofn.org/what-is-a-cdfi/>

[2] CDFI Fund, CDFI Certification, <https://www.cdfifund.gov/programs-training/certification/cdfi>; List of certified CDFIs can be found at [https://www.cdfifund.gov/sites/cdfi/files/2022-11/CDFI\\_Cert\\_List\\_11-14-2022\\_Final.xlsx](https://www.cdfifund.gov/sites/cdfi/files/2022-11/CDFI_Cert_List_11-14-2022_Final.xlsx)

[3] Prison Policy Initiative, "Pretrial populations, disproportionately Black and Hispanic, have more than doubled over 15 years," <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/07/27/disparities/#slideshow/slideshow3/2>

[4] Garcia, Jorge Luis, et al, The Life Cycle Benefits of an Influential Early Childhood Program, National Bureau of Economic Research, page 59, Table 9, December 2016, [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working\\_papers/w22993/w22993.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w22993/w22993.pdf)

[5] USDA, Trends in food insecurity by race and ethnicity, 2001-21, <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/interactive-charts-and-highlights/>

[6] American Public Health Association, Racism Declarations, accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health/racism-declarations>



[7] CEO Action for Racial Equity, Advancing Transparency and Accountability: A Framework for a Law Enforcement Officer Accountability Database, November 2022, <https://ceoactionracialequity.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/The-LETA-Report-November-2022-1.pdf>

[8] Mass.gov, Non-motor vehicle suspensions, accessed December 23, 2022, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/non-motor-vehicle-suspensions>

[9] See, e.g., New Jersey Motor Vehicles Affordability and Fairness Task Force, Final Report Executive Summary, February 2006, [https://www.state.nj.us/mvc/pdf/about/AFTF\\_final\\_02.pdf](https://www.state.nj.us/mvc/pdf/about/AFTF_final_02.pdf)

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