

Return to State of the Union Report

Persons Below the Poverty Line

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Section 1: Top 35 Countries with Lowest Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Line

Rank	Country	Percent Below Poverty Line (Gallup World Poll Approximate Data 2023)
1	Norge (Norway)	3.1%
2	Danmark (Denmark)	3.3%
3	Suomi (Finland)	3.5%
4	Sverige (Sweden)	3.7%
5	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	4.0%
6	Nederland (Netherlands)	4.2%
7	Österreich (Austria)	4.4%
8	Deutschland (Germany)	4.6%
9	Éire (Ireland)	4.8%
10	Belgique (Belgium)	5.0%
11	日本 Nippon (Japan)	5.2%
12	한국 Hanguk (South Korea)	5.3%
13	République française (France)	5.5%
14	Canada	5.6%
15	Australia	5.8%
16	New Zealand	6.0%
17	Česko (Czech Republic)	6.1%
18	Slovenia	6.2%
19	Polska (Poland)	6.3%
20	Portugal	6.5%
21	España (Spain)	6.7%
22	Italia (Italy)	6.9%
23	Estonia	7.0%
24	Latvija (Latvia)	7.2%
25	Lietuva (Lithuania)	7.3%

26	Magyarország (Hungary)	7.4%
27	Slovensko (Slovakia)	7.5%
28	ישראל Yisra'el (Israel)	7.7%
29	Singapore	7.8%
30	台灣 (Taiwan)	8.0%
31	Chile	8.2%
32	Ελλάδα Elláda (Greece)	8.4%
33	الإمارات العربية المتحدة Al-Imārāt al-‘Arabiyya al-Muttaḥida (United Arab Emirates)	8.6%
34	السعودية Al-Su‘ūdiyya (Saudi Arabia)	8.8%
35	Croatia	9.0%
38-40	United States	11.5% (est.)

The United States does not appear in the top 35 countries with the lowest poverty rates. According to the U.S. Census Bureau 2023 national poverty estimate, approximately 11.5 percent of the population lives below the federal poverty threshold. When compared across developed economies this places the United States roughly between rank 38 and 40.

Key drivers include higher income inequality, regional cost of living differences, limited universal social benefits, higher healthcare costs, and housing affordability challenges in major urban areas.

Sources: Gallup World Poll <https://www.gallup.com> | World Bank Poverty Data <https://www.worldbank.org> | OECD Income Distribution Database <https://www.oecd.org> | U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Statistics <https://www.census.gov>

Poverty rates reflect the economic and social policies of each nation. Countries that invest heavily in universal healthcare, education, and robust social safety nets consistently demonstrate the lowest poverty percentages. The data presented in this table draws from the most recent available survey research conducted by international organizations.

Top 8 Countries with Lowest Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Line

Rank	Country	Percent Below Poverty Line (Gallup World Poll Approximate Data 2023)
1	Norge (Norway)	3.1%
2	Danmark (Denmark)	3.3%
3	Suomi (Finland)	3.5%
4	Sverige (Sweden)	3.7%
5	Suisse or Schweiz (Switzerland)	4.0%
6	Nederland (Netherlands)	4.2%
7	Österreich (Austria)	4.4%
8	Deutschland (Germany)	4.6%

Section 2: What Other Countries Have Done to Have the Lowest Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Line

The nations that have achieved the lowest poverty rates share several common strategies: robust social safety nets, universal access to healthcare and education, active labor market policies, and strong employee protections. The following country profiles outline the specific mechanisms each nation employs.

Norge (Norway)

Norge's poverty reduction strategy centers on universal social insurance programs managed by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration NAV <https://www.nav.no>. These programs integrate unemployment benefits, disability benefits, income assistance, and job placement services within a unified national administrative system.

The Norge government finances social protection programs using revenues from the Government Pension Fund Global, a sovereign wealth fund funded by petroleum revenues. This allows Norge to stabilize long-term social spending and maintain strong income redistribution policies.

Active labor market policies include government-funded vocational training, employer wage subsidies for hiring unemployed workers, and intensive job counseling programs coordinated through municipal employment offices.

Norge's national childcare guarantee program ensures that all families have access to subsidized early childhood education, which significantly increases labor force participation among parents.

Danmark (Denmark)

Danmark operates a flexicurity labor market model combining flexible hiring rules with strong unemployment insurance administered through the Danish Ministry of Employment <https://bm.dk>.

The Denmark unemployment insurance system provides income replacement benefits for unemployed workers while requiring participation in retraining and job placement programs coordinated by the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment <https://star.dk>.

Danmark invests heavily in adult education programs, allowing workers to receive government-funded skills training and professional certification throughout their careers.

Municipal governments administer housing support programs ensuring that low-income households receive rental subsidies and access to affordable housing developments.

Suomi (Finland)

The Suomi Social Insurance Institution Kela <https://www.kela.fi> administers national benefits including income support, housing allowances, unemployment benefits, and student financial aid.

Suomi prioritizes equal access to education through comprehensive public schooling funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture <https://okm.fi>.

The Suomi housing policy includes large-scale public housing investments and rent regulation mechanisms designed to stabilize housing costs in urban areas.

Labor market reintegration programs focus on long-term unemployed individuals through individualized employment plans and subsidized job placements.

Sverige (Sweden)

Sverige maintains universal welfare programs administered through the Swedish Social Insurance Agency <https://www.forsakringskassan.se> including parental leave benefits, sickness insurance, disability benefits, and housing allowances.

The Sverige Public Employment Service <https://arbetsformedlingen.se> operates extensive employment counseling and retraining programs.

Sverige's collective bargaining system establishes sector-wide wage agreements negotiated between trade unions and employer associations.

Extensive childcare subsidies enable parents to remain in the workforce while raising children.

Schweiz (Switzerland)

Schweiz relies on a decentralized welfare system coordinated through cantonal governments and federal oversight by the Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office <https://www.bsv.admin.ch>.

The Schweiz vocational training system integrates apprenticeships with classroom education through programs coordinated by the State Secretariat for Education Research and Innovation <https://www.sbf.admin.ch>.

Many Schweiz companies participate in apprenticeship programs which provide young people with early entry into skilled professions.

Social assistance programs are administered locally allowing municipalities to tailor benefits to regional economic conditions.

Nederland (Netherlands)

The Dutch social protection system provides minimum income guarantees through municipal welfare programs funded by the national government.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment <https://www.government.nl> oversees unemployment benefits, disability insurance, and income support programs.

The Employee Insurance Agency UWV <https://www.uwv.nl> administers job placement programs and disability employment services.

Affordable housing initiatives rely heavily on nonprofit housing associations which construct and manage large portions of the national housing stock.

Österreich (Austria)

Österreich provides strong family benefits including child allowances and parental leave payments administered by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs <https://www.sozialministerium.at>.

The Österreich Public Employment Service <https://www.ams.at> administers training programs and job matching services for unemployed workers.

Österreich invests heavily in vocational education integrated with industry partnerships allowing students to enter skilled employment early.

Rent control policies and housing subsidies help maintain stable housing costs for lower-income households.

Deutschland (Germany)

Deutschland's social insurance model includes unemployment benefits, public health insurance, and pension systems administered through the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs <https://www.bmas.de>.

The Federal Employment Agency <https://www.arbeitsagentur.de> provides extensive job placement assistance and training programs.

The Hartz labor market reforms introduced structured job search requirements and employment services aimed at reducing long-term unemployment.

Deutschland's apprenticeship system integrates education with employment providing structured career pathways for young workers.

**Lowest Percentage of Persons Below the Poverty Line
by World Region (Approximate 2023 Data)**

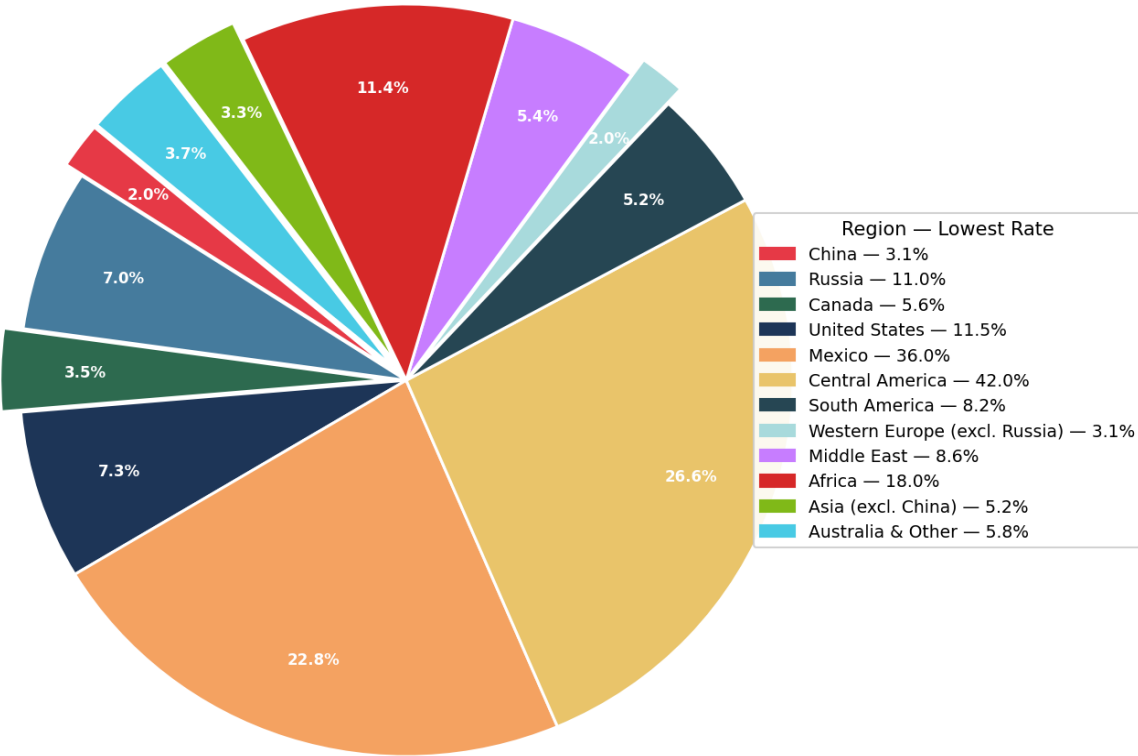


Figure 1: Lowest Percentage of Persons Below the Poverty Line by World Region (Approximate 2023 Data)

Section 3: What the U.S. Can Do to Reduce the Percent of Persons Below the Poverty Line

The United States has the capacity to meaningfully reduce poverty through coordinated federal action. The following policy recommendations reflect approaches that have proven effective in comparable economies and are attainable within existing governmental frameworks.

1. Department of Labor shall expand national workforce retraining programs targeting displaced workers in declining industries.
2. Department of Housing and Urban Development shall expand housing voucher programs and incentivize construction of affordable housing.
3. Department of Health and Human Services shall increase funding for community health centers serving low-income populations.
4. Department of Education shall increase Pell Grant funding to improve access to higher education.
5. Department of Agriculture shall expand rural economic development initiatives and broadband infrastructure.
6. Internal Revenue Service shall expand Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility and outreach.
7. Small Business Administration shall expand microloan programs for low-income entrepreneurs.
8. Department of Transportation shall fund affordable public transit systems in underserved communities.
9. Department of Energy shall expand home energy assistance programs.
10. Department of Commerce shall establish regional economic development zones.
11. Department of Labor shall expand apprenticeship programs.
12. Department of Education shall support community college workforce partnerships.
13. Department of Treasury shall develop financial inclusion programs.
14. Department of Veterans Affairs shall expand employment support programs for veterans.
15. HUD shall expand housing development tax incentives.
16. HHS shall expand childcare subsidy programs.
17. USDA shall expand food security programs including SNAP.
18. Department of Commerce shall support technology job training.
19. Department of Labor shall strengthen wage theft enforcement.
20. Department of Justice shall enforce fair employment laws.
21. Treasury shall support community development financial institutions.
22. Department of Energy shall support clean energy workforce development.
23. Department of Education shall expand early childhood education funding.
24. HUD shall support homelessness prevention programs.
25. HHS shall expand mental health services.
26. Department of Commerce shall support small business incubators.
27. Treasury shall implement tax incentives for living-wage employers.
28. Department of Transportation shall invest in infrastructure employment.

29. Department of Labor shall expand youth employment programs.

30. Federal Reserve coordination with Treasury shall support community investment.

Successful implementation of these recommendations requires sustained bipartisan commitment, adequate appropriations, and rigorous program evaluation. Coordination among federal departments is essential to eliminate redundancies and maximize impact on poverty reduction.

Section 3A: What Corporations, Organizations, and Private Individuals Can Do to Reduce Poverty

Federal and state government policy alone cannot eliminate poverty. The most durable and far-reaching poverty reduction in comparable nations has occurred when public investment has been matched by private sector commitment, civil society engagement, and individual action.

The following section identifies specific, actionable steps that corporations, nonprofit organizations, faith communities, philanthropists, and private individuals can take to meaningfully reduce poverty in the United States. These contributions complement the legislative framework established in the preceding sections and are essential to achieving lasting change.

A. Corporations and Businesses

Corporations are among the most powerful non-governmental actors in the American economy. Their decisions about wages, hiring, benefits, supplier relationships, and community investment have a direct and immediate impact on the economic conditions of millions of workers and families.

The following actions represent meaningful, proven strategies through which businesses of all sizes can contribute to poverty reduction.

Pay Living Wages and Adopt Transparent Pay Practices. The most direct corporate contribution to poverty reduction is paying all employees including part-time, hourly, seasonal, and contract workers wages sufficient to cover basic living costs in their geographic area.

Corporations should adopt the living wage standard calculated by the MIT Living Wage Calculator or an equivalent methodology, which accounts for actual local costs of housing, food, childcare, healthcare, and transportation rather than the federally mandated minimum wage, which in many regions falls far below a livable income.

Large employers with geographically diverse workforces should establish regional wage floors reflecting local cost-of-living differences. In addition, corporations should publish transparent pay scales and conduct annual internal equity audits to identify and correct gender, racial, and other pay disparities that disproportionately affect workers from low-income backgrounds.

Provide Comprehensive Employee Benefits to All Workers. Access to employer-provided benefits is one of the most significant economic divides between higher-income and lower-income workers.

Corporations should extend meaningful benefits packages to all full-time and part-time employees, including: affordable employer-sponsored health insurance with premiums at or below 5 percent of the employee's gross wages; paid sick leave of not fewer than seven days per year; paid family and medical leave of not fewer than twelve weeks for the birth, adoption, or fostering of a child or for a serious health condition; access to a defined-contribution retirement

plan with employer matching; and subsidized childcare assistance or access to an employer-operated or employer-subsidized childcare center.

Research consistently shows that employers who provide robust benefits experience lower turnover, reduced absenteeism, and higher workforce productivity—outcomes that offset the cost of expanded benefits in most industries within two to three years.

Adopt Equitable and Opportunity-Based Hiring Practices.—Corporate hiring practices often systematically exclude individuals from low-income backgrounds through degree requirements, credit checks, criminal background screening, and unpaid internship pipelines. Businesses committed to poverty reduction should: eliminate four-year degree requirements from job postings where the skills required can be demonstrated through experience, certification, or competency assessments; adopt “ban the box” policies delaying criminal history inquiries until a conditional job offer has been made; discontinue the use of consumer credit checks in hiring decisions for positions that do not involve direct financial fiduciary responsibility; expand paid internship and apprenticeship programs, actively recruiting from community colleges, vocational programs, and reentry employment programs; and partner with workforce development organizations, including those supported by programs described in Section 3 of this report, to build pipelines from training programs directly into employment.

Invest in Supplier Diversity and Local Procurement. Large corporations exert enormous economic influence through their procurement decisions. Directing a meaningful share of purchasing contracts to small businesses owned by women, racial and ethnic minorities, veterans, and individuals from economically distressed communities creates wealth, employment, and economic multiplier effects in communities that are disproportionately affected by poverty.

Corporations should set formal supplier diversity targets, provide technical assistance and mentorship to small business suppliers, and offer prompt payment terms (net 15 or net 30) to small and minority-owned businesses that depend on timely cash flow to sustain operations.

Anchor institutions including hospitals, universities, and major manufacturers should adopt local procurement policies committing a defined percentage of their purchasing budgets to vendors located within their regional communities.

Invest in Employee Training, Education, and Upward Mobility. Many low-wage workers are trapped in entry-level positions not because of lack of ability but because their employers provide no pathways to advancement. Corporations should establish tuition assistance programs allowing all employees to pursue further education while working, with reimbursement of at least \$5,250 annually per employee the current IRS tax-exclusion limit for employer educational assistance. Internal promotion tracking systems should be implemented to identify workers who have been in the same role for more than two years and ensure they are receiving active career development support.

Skills-based promotion policies that evaluate workers on demonstrated competency rather than credentials or tenure alone can help workers from low-income backgrounds advance at rates that reflect their actual contribution and potential.

Direct Corporate Philanthropy and Community Investment Toward Root Causes of Poverty. Corporate charitable giving, foundation grants, and community investment programs represent a multi-billion-dollar annual resource that can be targeted with much greater precision toward poverty’s root causes.

Companies should direct their corporate social responsibility (CSR) budgets toward organizations and initiatives with demonstrated, measurable impact on economic mobility,

including community development financial institutions (CDFIs), affordable housing developers, early childhood education programs, food security organizations, and workforce training nonprofits.

Corporate foundations should fund multi-year general operating support grants rather than restricted project grants, giving nonprofit partners the flexibility to respond to community needs rather than being constrained by narrow funder priorities.

Businesses should also consider establishing or contributing to employee volunteer programs that deploy skilled workers, accountants, attorneys, technologists, project managers, and others—as pro bono consultants to poverty-fighting nonprofits and small businesses in underserved communities.

Financial Institutions: Expand Access to Affordable Credit and Banking Services.—Banks, credit unions, and fintech companies have a significant role to play in reducing the financial exclusion that traps millions of low-income Americans in cycles of high-cost debt.

Financial institutions should: expand Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) investments in persistent poverty counties and economically distressed communities; offer low-cost or no-cost basic checking and savings accounts without minimum balance requirements or overdraft fees that disproportionately burden low-income customers; develop affordable small-dollar loan products as alternatives to predatory payday and installment loans; partner with employers to offer payroll advance programs allowing workers to access earned wages before payday at no or minimal cost; support financial literacy programs in schools and community organizations; and actively recruit and promote employees from low-income backgrounds into banking careers, addressing the sector’s persistent underrepresentation of low-income communities in its professional workforce.

B. Nonprofit Organizations, Foundations, and Faith Communities

The nonprofit sector, including foundations, advocacy organizations, social service providers, and faith-based communities, represents the primary delivery infrastructure for poverty-reduction services in most American communities. Beyond service delivery, these organizations play indispensable roles in advocacy, community organizing, data collection, and bridging the gap between government programs and the people those programs are designed to serve.

Strengthen and Coordinate Direct Service Networks.—Social service nonprofits providing food assistance, emergency shelter, housing navigation, job placement, childcare, healthcare navigation, and legal aid are the front line of America’s response to poverty.

These organizations can increase their impact by: adopting integrated case management systems that identify and address the multiple, intersecting needs of individuals and families rather than treating each need in isolation; co-locating services with other providers to reduce transportation barriers for clients; implementing evidence-based program models with documented effectiveness and committing to ongoing program evaluation; training staff and volunteers in trauma-informed care practices, recognizing that a high proportion of individuals experiencing poverty have also experienced trauma; and building relationships with government agencies to facilitate client enrollment in all public benefits for which they are eligible, including SNAP, Medicaid, EITC, housing assistance, and childcare subsidies that many eligible families fail to claim.

Engage in Policy Advocacy and Systems Change. While direct services address immediate needs, lasting poverty reduction requires changing the laws, policies, and institutional structures that generate poverty.

Nonprofit organizations and foundations are well-positioned to advocate for living wage legislation, expanded Earned Income Tax Credit eligibility, tenant protections, anti-discrimination enforcement in hiring and housing, expanded Medicaid coverage, and improved public transit.

Organizations should invest in developing the policy capacity of community members with lived experience of poverty, ensuring that advocacy reflects the perspectives and priorities of those most affected rather than solely the views of professional advocates. Coalitions that unite direct-service providers, community organizers, researchers, and faith communities around shared policy agendas are consistently more effective than single-organization efforts.

3. Foundations: Reform Grantmaking to Better Serve Low-Income Communities.—Private foundations control hundreds of billions of dollars in charitable assets and, under IRS rules, are required to distribute at least 5 percent of their assets annually in grants and qualifying distributions.

To maximize poverty-reduction impact, foundations should: increase annual payout rates above the 5 percent minimum to deploy more capital toward urgent community needs; provide multi-year general operating support grants rather than one-year restricted project grants, which are chronically insufficient for building organizational capacity; reduce burdensome reporting requirements that divert nonprofit staff time from service delivery to grant administration; fund organizations led by and accountable to low-income communities rather than primarily funding well-established organizations with professional development staff; prioritize CDFIs, community land trusts, worker cooperatives, and other wealth-building vehicles that address the structural roots of poverty rather than only its symptoms; and conduct participatory grantmaking processes that involve community members in setting funding priorities.

Faith Communities: Leverage Trust, Reach, and Assets for Community Well-Being.—Religious congregations and faith-based organizations possess unique assets in the fight against poverty: trusted relationships with community members who may not engage with government agencies or secular nonprofits; physical facilities that can serve as community hubs, emergency shelters, childcare centers, food pantries, and meeting spaces; volunteer networks that can be mobilized quickly for both service and advocacy; and a moral framework motivating sustained commitment to justice and human dignity.

Faith communities can expand their poverty-reduction impact by: partnering with local government and nonprofits to host social services on congregation premises; establishing or contributing to community benefit organizations that aggregate the resources of multiple congregations; advocating through denominational and interfaith networks for legislation that protects and advances the interests of low-income people; and ensuring that congregational resources, including discretionary funds for member assistance, are accessible to members experiencing financial hardship without stigma or burdensome qualification requirements.

C. Colleges, Universities, and Research Institutions

Expand Access, Affordability, and Support for Low-Income Students.—Colleges and universities that are committed to economic mobility should: adopt need-blind admissions policies and meet 100 percent of demonstrated financial need for all admitted students through grants rather than loans; establish robust retention support programs including emergency aid funds, food pantries, mental health services, and housing assistance for enrolled students experiencing poverty; recruit aggressively from community colleges and high schools in low-income communities; eliminate legacy admissions preferences that advantage applicants from wealthy families; and partner with local high schools to offer dual enrollment programs giving

low-income students college credits while still in high school, reducing time-to-degree and total cost of attendance.

Deploy Institutional Assets as Anchor Institutions.—Universities are major employers, landowners, and consumers of goods and services in their communities.

As anchor institutions, they can direct their economic power toward poverty reduction by: paying all campus employees—including contracted food service, janitorial, and security workers—living wages; prioritizing local and minority-owned vendors in procurement; investing university endowments in CDFIs and affordable housing developers through mission-related investment programs; making university facilities, including libraries, fitness centers, and health clinics, available to community members who are not enrolled students; and conducting community-engaged research on local poverty and its root causes, sharing findings with municipal governments and community organizations in accessible, actionable formats.

D. Private Individuals and Households

Individual action, in the aggregate, constitutes an enormous force for change. While no individual bears sole responsibility for a systemic problem, the choices that millions of individuals make about how they give, vote, spend, volunteer, mentor, and treat others collectively shape the social and economic fabric of communities across the country. The following represent specific, evidence-supported actions that private individuals can take to contribute meaningfully to poverty reduction.

Engage in Informed Civic Participation.—The most impactful single action many individuals can take to reduce poverty is to vote in every election—federal, state, and local—with an informed understanding of candidates’ positions on poverty-related issues including housing affordability, minimum wage, Medicaid expansion, early childhood education funding, and tax policy.

Local elections in particular—for city council, county commission, school board, and state legislature—often directly determine the policies that shape economic conditions in low-income communities, yet typically attract very low voter participation, giving engaged citizens disproportionate influence.

Beyond voting, individuals can contact their elected representatives to express support for specific poverty-reduction legislation, attend public hearings on zoning, housing, and budget decisions that affect low-income communities, and volunteer for issue campaigns and candidate campaigns that prioritize economic equity.

Give Strategically and Generously to High-Impact Organizations.—Individual charitable giving is a powerful tool for poverty reduction when directed toward organizations with demonstrated effectiveness. Those who can afford to give should consider committing a defined percentage of their annual income—the historical tithe of 10 percent, or the “Giving What We Can” pledge of 10 percent, provide useful benchmarks—to organizations addressing poverty’s root causes.

Effective giving principles include: researching recipient organizations through tools such as Charity Navigator, GiveWell, and the Urban Institute’s Nonprofit Finance Fund to assess financial transparency and program effectiveness; prioritizing unrestricted gifts that allow organizations to use funds where they are most needed; donating to organizations led by and accountable to the communities they serve; contributing to local community foundations and CDFIs, which deploy capital directly within specific geographic communities; and considering impact investing, placing capital in community development loan funds, affordable housing

projects, or worker cooperatives that generate both financial returns and measurable community benefit.

Volunteer Skills and Time in Ways That Serve Real Community Needs.—Effective volunteering requires matching skills and availability to genuine organizational needs rather than personal preferences for certain types of service.

High-impact volunteer opportunities include: tax preparation assistance through IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites, which help low-income filers claim thousands of dollars in EITC and other refundable credits they might otherwise miss; financial coaching and credit counseling through certified nonprofit financial counseling organizations; tutoring and mentoring of students from low-income households through school-based and community-based programs; legal pro bono work through local bar associations and legal aid organizations; skilled volunteering in areas such as accounting, marketing, technology, human resources, and strategic planning for under-resourced nonprofits; and participating in Habitat for Humanity, affordable housing development organizations, and community land trusts that build and rehabilitate housing for low-income families.

Mentor Youth and Adults Navigating Economic Mobility.—Social capital—the networks of relationships that provide access to information, opportunities, and support—is distributed profoundly unequally in the United States. Individuals from middle- and upper-income backgrounds accumulate social capital through family networks, elite educational institutions, and professional associations, while individuals from low-income backgrounds often lack access to the mentors, references, and professional contacts that facilitate economic advancement.

Individuals who have access to such networks can help bridge this gap by: formally mentoring youth from low-income communities through programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, Year Up, and local school-based mentoring initiatives; providing informal career guidance, job search advice, and professional networking introductions to first-generation college students and recent graduates from low-income households; serving as references, sponsors, and advocates within their own professional networks for qualified candidates from underrepresented economic backgrounds; and hiring formerly incarcerated individuals, individuals with gaps in their employment histories, and others who face barriers to employment, based on demonstrated competence rather than credentialing proxies.

Make Consumer and Economic Choices That Support Low-Income Workers and Communities.—Every purchasing decision is also an economic choice about which businesses, workers, and communities to support. Individuals can align their spending with their values by: patronizing local and minority-owned businesses that pay their workers fairly and reinvest in local communities rather than exclusively shopping at national chains that often pay minimum wages and extract profits to distant shareholders; purchasing fair trade products, which certify that producers in low-income countries received equitable compensation; banking with credit unions and community banks rather than large national banks that have historically underinvested in low-income communities; investing personal retirement savings in ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) funds or community investment vehicles that include explicit commitments to worker welfare and community development; and choosing employers, when possible, that pay living wages and provide comprehensive benefits to all workers, thereby rewarding companies that invest in their workforce.

High Net Worth Individuals and Philanthropists: Commit Transformative Capital to Systemic Change.—Individuals who have accumulated significant wealth bear a particular opportunity and responsibility to deploy capital toward poverty reduction at scale.

High-impact strategies available to affluent individuals and philanthropists include: establishing or contributing to donor-advised funds or private foundations with explicit poverty-reduction missions and transparent grantmaking criteria; signing the Giving Pledge or equivalent commitment to donate the majority of their wealth to charitable causes during their lifetime; funding longitudinal research on poverty's causes and evidence-based interventions, as rigorous research is chronically underfunded relative to its potential to improve policy; capitalizing CDFIs, community development loan funds, and affordable housing developers at scale, using program-related investments (PRIs) and mission-related investments (MRIs) to deploy charitable assets without fully sacrificing financial returns; advocating publicly for tax policies that reduce economic inequality, including robust estate taxes, higher marginal income tax rates on very high incomes, and stronger enforcement of existing tax laws—recognizing that a tax system that allows wealth to accumulate without limit across generations is itself a structural driver of poverty; and supporting participatory grantmaking initiatives that give low-income communities direct decision-making authority over how philanthropic dollars are spent in their communities.

Property Owners and Landlords: Provide Stable, Affordable, and Safe Housing.—

Individual landlords own a majority of the rental housing in most American cities and towns. Their decisions about rents, maintenance standards, tenant selection, and lease enforcement have an immediate and profound impact on the housing security of low-income families. Property owners committed to reducing poverty can: charge rents that are affordable to households earning the median income for their area rather than maximizing rents to market ceiling; participate in Housing Choice Voucher programs, accepting tenants who use federal rental assistance; maintain properties to habitability standards that exceed minimum legal requirements; practice non-predatory lease enforcement, offering payment plans and mediation before initiating eviction proceedings; avoid discriminatory tenant screening practices that exclude individuals based on prior eviction records, criminal histories unrelated to tenancy, or source of income; and consider selling properties to community land trusts or affordable housing organizations when liquidating real estate assets, preserving long-term affordability rather than returning properties to market-rate use.

E. Collective Action: The Multiplier Effect

The most powerful poverty-reduction outcomes occur when the actions described above are pursued in concert rather than in isolation. A corporation that pays living wages and funds workforce training, whose executives mentor low-income youth and whose foundation supports affordable housing, operating in a city where engaged citizens have elected officials committed to equitable policy, partnering with a university that conducts community-engaged research and a faith community that provides emergency services—this network of interlocking commitments creates conditions in which poverty can be durably reduced. Research on community development consistently shows that cross-sector collaboration between government, business, philanthropy, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and engaged individuals produces outcomes that no single sector could achieve independently.

The nations that have achieved the lowest poverty rates described in Section 1 of this report have done so not solely through government programs but through a broad social compact in which employers, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and individual citizens each accept responsibility for the well-being of their fellow community members. Achieving comparable results in the United States will require nothing less than the same: a national recommitment to the proposition that poverty is not an inevitable condition but a solvable

problem, and that every sector of American society has both the opportunity and the obligation to be part of that solution.

The data and analysis presented in this document draw from the following authoritative sources. Readers are encouraged to consult these sources directly for the most current information.

World Bank Poverty and Inequality Database <https://www.worldbank.org>

OECD Income Distribution Database <https://www.oecd.org>

Gallup World Poll <https://www.gallup.com>

U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Statistics <https://www.census.gov>

U.S. Department of Labor <https://www.dol.gov>

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development <https://www.hud.gov>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services <https://www.hhs.gov>

Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration <https://www.nav.no>

Danish Ministry of Employment <https://bm.dk>

Finnish Social Insurance Institution <https://www.kela.fi>

Swedish Social Insurance Agency <https://www.forsakringskassan.se>

Swiss Federal Social Insurance Office <https://www.bsv.admin.ch>

German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs <https://www.bmas.de>

Austrian Federal Ministry of Social Affairs <https://www.sozialministerium.at>

Note: Data marked as approximate reflects survey-based estimates and may vary from official national statistics. All poverty rates are expressed as percentages of the national population living below nationally or internationally defined poverty thresholds.

Section 5: Draft of a House Bill

Title and Number: H.R. 7200 National Poverty Reduction and Economic Mobility Act

Identifying the Bill. A bill to establish coordinated federal policies to significantly reduce the percentage of persons living below the poverty line in the United States through workforce expansion, economic development, education investment, healthcare access, and housing affordability programs.

Short Title

This Act may be cited as the National Poverty Reduction and Economic Mobility Act.

SECTION 1. Definitions.

In this Act, the following definitions apply:

(a) Poverty Line.—The term “poverty line” means the federal poverty threshold as defined and updated annually by the U.S. Census Bureau and the Department of Health and Human Services pursuant to the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)). When applying this definition to program eligibility under this Act, the applicable poverty line shall be the most recently published annual threshold in effect at the time of an individual’s application or enrollment. The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall issue guidance within 90 days of enactment specifying how poverty line calculations shall be applied for each program authorized herein, including adjustments for household size, geographic cost-of-living variation, and the treatment of non-cash income and benefits.

(b) Eligible Individual.—The term “eligible individual” means any person whose household income, calculated on an annual basis and inclusive of all earned and unearned income sources, falls at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line as defined in subsection (a). For purposes of this definition—

- (1) “household income” includes wages, salaries, tips, self-employment income, interest, dividends, rental income, alimony, child support, Social Security benefits, and any other recurring payments received by any member of the household, but shall not include non-recurring lump-sum payments such as life insurance proceeds or disaster relief grants;
- (2) “household” means all persons sharing a single dwelling unit who are related by blood, marriage, legal partnership, adoption, or mutual financial dependency; and
- (3) eligibility shall be determined as of the date of application for each program and shall be subject to periodic redetermination at intervals not exceeding 12 months, except that no individual shall be terminated from program participation without advance written notice and an opportunity to contest the termination determination in accordance with applicable administrative procedures.

(c) Coordinating Agency.—The term “coordinating agency” refers to the lead Federal department or independent agency designated with primary responsibility for implementing each program authorized under this Act. Each coordinating agency shall—

- (1) designate a senior official not below the rank of Deputy Assistant Secretary, or equivalent, to serve as the agency’s Poverty Reduction Program Officer responsible for overseeing compliance with this Act, coordinating with the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council established in SEC. 7, and fulfilling all reporting obligations established herein;
- (2) submit to the Council, within 180 days of enactment, a comprehensive implementation plan setting forth program timelines, funding allocation strategies,

interagency coordination procedures, performance benchmarks, and equity assessment frameworks; and

(3) maintain a publicly accessible program information webpage updated not less than quarterly with current enrollment data, performance outcomes, and funding expenditures for each program under the agency’s jurisdiction.

(d) Program.—The term “program” means any activity, grant, service, benefit, or initiative authorized and funded under this Act, whether administered directly by a Federal coordinating agency or through State, local, territorial, Tribal, or nonprofit intermediaries.

(e) Persistent Poverty County.—The term “persistent poverty county” means any county, parish, borough, or equivalent jurisdiction in which 20 percent or more of the population has lived below the poverty line for 30 or more consecutive years, as measured by the three most recent decennial censuses of the United States.

(f) Economically Distressed Community.—The term “economically distressed community” means a geographic area that meets one or more of the following criteria as of the most recent available data published by the U.S. Census Bureau or the Bureau of Labor Statistics—

- (1) an unemployment rate at least 1 percentage point above the national average for the most recent 12-month period for which data are available;
- (2) a per capita income not exceeding 80 percent of the national average per capita income; or
- (3) a poverty rate of 20 percent or more of the total population.

(g) State.—The term “State” means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(h) Tribal Government.—The term “Tribal government” means the recognized governing body of any Indian or Alaska Native Tribe, Band, Nation, Pueblo, Village, Community, Component Band, or Component Reservation that is eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their status as Indians, as listed on the Federal Register list of recognized Tribes published pursuant to the Federally Recognized Indian Tribe List Act of 1994 (25 U.S.C. 5131).

SECTION 2. Findings and Purpose.

(a) Findings.—The Congress finds the following:

- (1) Approximately 11.5 percent of Americans—representing more than 37 million individuals—live below the federal poverty threshold, placing the United States among the highest poverty rates of any comparable developed economy as measured by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Income Distribution Database.
- (2) Persistent poverty imposes substantial and measurable costs on affected individuals, families, communities, and the national economy, including—
 - (A) reduced lifetime earnings, diminished labor force participation, and lower aggregate economic productivity estimated to cost the national economy in excess of \$1 trillion annually in lost output;
 - (B) increased public expenditures on emergency healthcare, correctional facilities, homelessness services, and child welfare programs attributable to conditions associated with poverty;

(C) elevated rates of chronic disease, mental illness, substance use disorder, and premature mortality among individuals experiencing poverty, resulting in disproportionate burdens on Medicaid, Medicare, and public health infrastructure; and

(D) diminished educational attainment, reduced intergenerational mobility, and perpetuation of concentrated poverty across generations and communities.

(3) Poverty in the United States is not uniformly distributed. Rates of poverty are disproportionately high among—

(A) children under the age of 18, who experience poverty at a rate exceeding the national average and who face lasting developmental and educational consequences from childhood exposure to poverty;

(B) rural communities and persistent poverty counties, where geographic isolation, limited employment opportunities, and reduced access to public services compound the effects of low income;

(C) racial and ethnic minority populations, including Black, Hispanic, and Native American communities, who continue to experience poverty rates significantly above the national average, reflecting historical and ongoing inequities in access to education, employment, housing, and wealth-building opportunities; and

(D) persons with disabilities and individuals experiencing homelessness, who face unique barriers to employment, housing stability, and participation in mainstream social and economic life.

(4) Nations that have achieved materially lower poverty rates—including Norge, Danmark, Suomi, Sverige, Deutschland, the Nederland, and Österreich—have done so through sustained, coordinated investment in universal healthcare coverage, high-quality early childhood education, active labor market policies, affordable housing, and robust income support programs. Evidence from these nations demonstrates that coordinated public investment in human capital and economic opportunity can measurably and sustainably reduce poverty without undermining economic growth or fiscal stability.

(5) The Federal Government of the United States possesses both the legal authority and the institutional capacity to coordinate a comprehensive national poverty reduction strategy. Existing Federal programs in workforce development, housing, healthcare, education, nutrition, and economic development provide a foundation upon which more integrated, impactful, and equitable policies can be built through enhanced coordination, increased investment, and rigorous accountability.

(b) Purpose.—The purpose of this Act is to—

(1) establish a comprehensive national framework for reducing the percentage of Americans living below the poverty line through coordinated federal investment in workforce development, affordable housing, healthcare access, educational opportunity, and economic mobility;

(2) leverage evidence-based models from comparable nations and domestic programs with demonstrated effectiveness in reducing poverty while adapting such models to the legal, institutional, cultural, and economic context of the United States;

(3) reduce duplicative and fragmented Federal program administration by establishing clear lines of interagency coordination, shared performance objectives, and unified accountability mechanisms;

- (4) advance equity in program access and outcomes by directing priority resources and attention to communities, populations, and regions experiencing disproportionately high rates of poverty and economic hardship;
- (5) respect and reinforce American values of individual initiative, community resilience, and local self-determination by partnering with State and local governments, nonprofit organizations, Tribal governments, faith-based institutions, and the private sector in program design and delivery; and
- (6) establish measurable national targets for poverty reduction, with an initial goal of reducing the national poverty rate to 8.5 percent or below within 10 years of enactment, and provide the institutional infrastructure, accountability mechanisms, and sustained funding commitments necessary to achieve that goal.

SEC. 3. Workforce Development Programs.

To expand employment opportunities and increase earned income for low-income individuals and displaced workers, the Secretary of Labor (hereinafter “the Secretary” for purposes of this section) shall carry out the following programs and activities:

(a) Workforce Retraining Initiative.—The Secretary shall expand and modernize national workforce retraining programs with particular emphasis on individuals displaced from declining industries, including manufacturing, fossil fuel extraction, retail, and other sectors experiencing structural contraction. In carrying out this subsection, the Secretary shall—

- (1) establish not fewer than 50 Regional Workforce Training Centers within 36 months of enactment, distributed equitably among rural, suburban, and urban communities, with priority placement in economically distressed communities and persistent poverty counties as defined in SEC. 1;
- (2) establish Regional Workforce Training Centers in partnership with community colleges, technical institutes, and private employers, with each center required to enter into memoranda of understanding with at least three local employers in high-growth sectors before receiving Federal operating funding;
- (3) develop and publish standardized occupational competency frameworks, updated on a biennial basis, in coordination with industry partners representing each of the priority sectors identified in subsection (b), to ensure that training curricula meet current and projected employer needs; and
- (4) provide eligible individuals enrolled in workforce retraining programs with support services including transportation assistance, childcare subsidies, income replacement stipends for the duration of training not exceeding 24 months, and case management services designed to address non-financial barriers to program completion.

(b) Apprenticeship and High-Growth Sector Programs.—Funding authorized under this section shall prioritize Registered Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs connecting job seekers with employers in high-growth sectors. The Secretary shall—

- (1) prioritize funding for apprenticeships in the following high-growth sectors—
 - (A) clean energy, including solar installation, wind energy, energy storage, and home weatherization and electrification;
 - (B) advanced manufacturing, including semiconductor fabrication, aerospace components, and precision engineering;
 - (C) healthcare services, including community health worker, medical technician, nursing aide, pharmacy technician, and behavioral health paraprofessional occupations;

(D) information technology, cybersecurity, data analytics, and software development; and

(E) infrastructure construction and maintenance, including broadband installation, water systems, transit, and roads;

(2) provide Federal incentive payments to employers that sponsor new Registered Apprenticeship programs and enroll apprentices who are eligible individuals as defined in SEC. 1(b), with incentive amounts scaled to the number of apprentices enrolled and the sector involved; and

(3) in coordination with the Department of Education, establish industry-recognized credential frameworks that allow apprenticeship completions to count toward credit at participating community colleges and technical institutions, enabling workers to advance toward associate degrees or bachelor's degrees while employed.

(c) Youth Employment Programs.—The Secretary shall expand youth employment and career development programs targeting disconnected youth aged 16 through 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor employed, including—

(1) expanded funding for YouthBuild programs providing construction skills training, GED preparation, and leadership development for youth from households below the poverty line;

(2) expanded Job Corps center capacity, with priority expansion in States with the highest concentrations of youth poverty; and

(3) competitive grants to community organizations, Tribal governments, and local governments for summer and year-round youth employment programs that provide subsidized work experience and mentorship to youth aged 16 through 24 from low-income households.

(d) Performance Standards and Accountability.—The Secretary shall establish minimum performance standards for all workforce training programs funded under this section. Such standards shall include—

(1) a program completion rate of not less than 70 percent of enrolled participants;

(2) an employment placement rate of not less than 65 percent of program completers within 6 months of completion, measured in employment that pays at least the prevailing wage for the relevant occupation in the relevant labor market;

(3) a participant earnings gain benchmark showing that program completers who are employed 12 months after completion earn at least 20 percent more than their pre-program earnings; and

(4) programs that fail to meet performance standards for two consecutive program years shall be subject to a corrective action plan, and programs that fail to meet performance standards for three consecutive program years shall lose eligibility for Federal funding under this section, subject to appeal procedures established by the Secretary.

SEC. 4. Housing Affordability Programs.

To reduce housing cost burdens on low-income households, expand the availability of affordable housing units, and prevent homelessness, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (hereinafter “the Secretary” for purposes of this section) shall carry out the following programs and activities:

(a) Housing Choice Voucher Expansion.—The Secretary shall expand the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program to serve an additional 500,000 households within 36 months of enactment of this Act. In administering the expanded program, the Secretary shall—

- (1) prioritize voucher issuance to households in which at least one member is employed or actively seeking employment, as demonstrated by enrollment in a workforce training program, registration with a State workforce agency, or documented job search activity, and whose annual household income falls below 50 percent of the area median income as determined by HUD;
- (2) establish a streamlined landlord participation program that reduces administrative burdens on private landlords accepting HCV vouchers, including—
 - (A) reducing inspection timelines from the current average to not more than 15 business days;
 - (B) providing landlord incentive payments of up to \$2,500 per unit to landlords in tight rental markets who agree to accept HCV tenants and maintain rents at or below established Fair Market Rents; and
 - (C) establishing a 72-hour emergency damage payment fund to compensate landlords promptly for documented tenant-caused damages exceeding the security deposit, reducing financial risk and incentivizing continued participation;
- (3) reduce the total processing time from voucher issuance to tenant move-in to not more than 60 days, and shall publish quarterly data on processing times by Public Housing Authority; and
- (4) update Fair Market Rents for HCV program calculations on a quarterly rather than annual basis in metropolitan areas where rental market conditions demonstrate significant volatility, as determined by the Secretary.

(b) Affordable Housing Supply and Zoning Reform Incentives.—The Secretary shall establish a competitive grant program to incentivize local governments and nonprofit housing organizations to adopt zoning reforms that enable construction of affordable housing units in economically diverse neighborhoods. Eligible grant recipients and activities shall include—

- (1) local governments that enact inclusionary zoning ordinances requiring that a minimum percentage of units in new residential developments of 10 or more units be designated as affordable to households at or below 60 percent of area median income;
- (2) local governments that adopt “by-right” permitting for affordable housing developments meeting established standards, eliminating discretionary approval requirements that delay or block affordable housing construction;
- (3) nonprofit Community Development Corporations and Community Land Trusts that acquire land or existing structures for the development or preservation of permanently affordable homeownership and rental housing; and
- (4) eligible incentive mechanisms available under this subsection shall include tax-exempt bond financing, Federal loan guarantees, direct capital grants for infrastructure improvements supporting affordable housing developments, and expedited environmental review processes, as appropriate.

(c) Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Enhancement.—The Secretary shall, in coordination with the Secretary of the Treasury, submit to the Congress within 180 days of enactment a legislative proposal to—

- (1) increase the annual Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) allocation by at least 50 percent to accelerate construction of affordable rental units;

- (2) establish a new “deep affordability bonus” LIHTC allocation for developments setting aside at least 20 percent of units for households at or below 30 percent of area median income; and
- (3) direct a minimum of 25 percent of total LIHTC allocations to persistent poverty counties and rural communities where affordable housing supply deficits are most acute.

(d) Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing.—The Secretary shall expand the Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program and the Continuum of Care (CoC) program to fund a national network of homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing services. In administering these programs, the Secretary shall—

- (1) increase annual ESG funding allocations and expand eligible uses to include short-term rental assistance, security deposit assistance, and utility arrears payments for households at imminent risk of eviction;
- (2) require all CoC-funded rapid rehousing programs to adopt a “Housing First” service model providing stable housing as a precondition for, rather than a reward for, participation in supportive services;
- (3) in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, expand the HUD-VASH program to eliminate veteran homelessness, with a national goal of reducing the veteran homeless population by 75 percent within 5 years of enactment; and
- (4) establish an eviction prevention pilot program in not fewer than 20 Continuum of Care jurisdictions providing legal representation to low-income tenants facing eviction proceedings, with the goal of reducing eviction rates by 30 percent in participating jurisdictions within 3 years of program launch.

SEC. 5. Healthcare Access Expansion and Agency Responsibilities.

To advance the national goal of reducing the percentage of persons living below the poverty line, the following Federal departments and agencies shall carry out the duties prescribed herein. Each agency shall coordinate with the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council established under SEC. 7 and shall submit reports in accordance with SEC. 8.

(a) Department of Health and Human Services.—The Secretary of Health and Human Services (hereinafter “the HHS Secretary”) shall administer and expand healthcare access programs for low-income individuals and families as follows:

- (1) Federally Qualified Health Centers.—The HHS Secretary shall increase formula grant funding for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) serving communities in which 30 percent or more of residents fall below the federal poverty line. Such funding shall—
 - (A) support the establishment of new FQHC service delivery sites in rural counties and urban neighborhoods designated as medically underserved areas by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA);
 - (B) expand sliding-scale fee structures to ensure that no eligible individual is denied services due to inability to pay; and
 - (C) provide enhanced reimbursement rates for FQHCs that demonstrate measurable improvements in health outcomes for patients living below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.
- (2) Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Services.—The HHS Secretary shall expand mental health and substance use disorder treatment programs in partnership with State Medicaid agencies. Such expansion shall include—

- (A) grants to community mental health centers serving populations with household incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line;
- (B) integration of behavioral health services into primary care settings at FQHCs; and
- (C) telehealth infrastructure investments to deliver mental health services to rural and underserved communities, with priority given to areas lacking licensed behavioral health providers within a 30-mile radius.

(3) Medicaid Outreach and Enrollment Assistance.—The HHS Secretary shall fund State-level outreach and enrollment assistance programs to ensure that all eligible individuals are enrolled in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Program activities shall include—

- (A) community-based enrollment navigators in counties with Medicaid take-up rates below the national average;
- (B) multilingual application assistance and materials; and
- (C) coordination with school districts, food banks, and housing agencies to identify and enroll eligible children and families.

(b) Department of Labor.—The Secretary of Labor (hereinafter “the Labor Secretary”) shall carry out workforce development and employment support duties as follows:

(1) Workforce Retraining and Apprenticeship Programs.—The Labor Secretary shall expand and modernize national workforce retraining programs with emphasis on individuals displaced from declining industries. Such programs shall—

- (A) establish regional training centers in partnership with community colleges, technical institutes, and private employers in high-growth sectors including clean energy, advanced manufacturing, healthcare services, and information technology;
- (B) fund Registered Apprenticeship programs and pre-apprenticeship pipelines targeting individuals from households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line; and
- (C) develop standardized competency frameworks in coordination with industry partners to ensure that training programs meet current and projected employer needs, with frameworks updated on a biennial basis.

(2) Youth and Veteran Employment Programs.—The Labor Secretary shall expand employment support for youth and veterans experiencing poverty, including—

- (A) YouthBuild and Job Corps program funding increases targeting disconnected youth aged 16 through 24 who are neither enrolled in school nor employed;
- (B) expanded Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) programming, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs, to reduce unemployment and underemployment among low-income veterans; and
- (C) wage theft enforcement initiatives and worker protection outreach in industries with high concentrations of low-wage workers, including agriculture, food service, domestic work, and construction.

- (i) The Labor Secretary shall increase the number of Wage and Hour Division investigators assigned to regions with documented patterns of wage theft violations;

(ii) the Labor Secretary shall establish a multilingual worker rights hotline and online complaint portal accessible to workers regardless of immigration status.

(c) Department of Housing and Urban Development.—The Secretary of Housing and Urban Development (hereinafter “the HUD Secretary”) shall administer affordable housing and homelessness prevention duties as follows:

(1) Housing Choice Voucher Expansion.—The HUD Secretary shall expand the Housing Choice Voucher program to serve an additional 500,000 households within 36 months of enactment of this Act, prioritizing households in which at least one member is employed or actively seeking employment and whose income falls below 50 percent of the area median income. In carrying out this paragraph, the HUD Secretary shall—

(A) establish incentive grants for local governments and nonprofit housing organizations that adopt zoning reforms enabling construction of affordable housing units in economically diverse neighborhoods;

(B) provide eligible incentives including tax-exempt bond financing, federal loan guarantees, and direct capital grants for infrastructure improvements supporting affordable housing developments; and

(C) reduce administrative processing times for voucher issuance and landlord participation agreements to no more than 60 days from application to occupancy.

(2) Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing.—The HUD Secretary shall expand the Emergency Solutions Grants program and the Continuum of Care program to fund homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing initiatives. Priority shall be given to—

(A) families with children who are experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness;

(B) individuals exiting correctional facilities, foster care, or inpatient treatment within the preceding 12 months; and

(C) veterans experiencing homelessness, in coordination with the Department of Veterans Affairs HUD-VASH program.

(d) Department of Education.—The Secretary of Education (hereinafter “the Education Secretary”) shall administer programs to expand educational access and attainment for low-income individuals and families as follows:

(1) Pell Grant Expansion.—The Education Secretary shall increase the maximum Pell Grant award by 25 percent above the amount provided in the fiscal year preceding enactment, and shall further—

(A) expand outreach targeting prospective students from households below 150 percent of the federal poverty line to increase awareness of Pell Grant eligibility;

(B) simplify the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) for households in which all members receive means-tested Federal benefits; and

(C) pilot year-round Pell Grant awards for qualifying students enrolled in accelerated workforce credential programs at community colleges and technical institutions.

(2) Early Childhood Education.—The Education Secretary shall expand Federal funding for early childhood education programs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, with the goal of ensuring universal access to high-quality preschool education for all children in households below the federal poverty line within five years of enactment. In meeting this goal, the Education Secretary shall—

- (A) increase per-child funding rates in Head Start grants to reflect current cost-of-living indices in each service area;
- (B) fund full-day, full-year preschool slots in communities where such programming is unavailable through State pre-K or other Federal programs; and
- (C) coordinate with HHS and the Department of Agriculture to integrate nutrition, health screening, and family support services within early childhood education settings.

(e) Department of Agriculture.—The Secretary of Agriculture (hereinafter “the Agriculture Secretary”) shall administer food security and rural economic development programs as follows:

(1) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.—The Agriculture Secretary shall expand SNAP outreach and enrollment to reach eligible households that are not currently enrolled, and shall—

- (A) modernize SNAP application and recertification processes to reduce administrative burdens on working families;
- (B) expand SNAP employment and training partnerships with State workforce agencies; and
- (C) fund incentive programs promoting the purchase of fresh produce and nutrient-dense foods at farmers’ markets, grocery stores, and other SNAP-authorized retailers in food-insecure communities.

(2) Rural Economic Development and Broadband.—The Agriculture Secretary shall expand rural economic development initiatives through the Rural Business-Cooperative Service and shall—

- (A) fund broadband infrastructure deployment in rural counties where fewer than 25 percent of residents have access to high-speed internet, prioritizing counties with poverty rates exceeding the national average;
- (B) provide loan guarantees and grant funding for rural small businesses and agricultural cooperatives owned or operated by low-income individuals.

(f) Department of the Treasury and Internal Revenue Service.—The Secretary of the Treasury and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue shall carry out income support and financial inclusion duties as follows:

(1) Earned Income Tax Credit Expansion.—The Secretary of the Treasury shall, in coordination with the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, propose regulatory and legislative amendments to expand EITC eligibility and benefit levels, and shall—

- (A) expand EITC eligibility to childless adults aged 19 through 24 and individuals aged 65 and over who do not currently qualify;
- (B) fund targeted EITC outreach campaigns in counties with historically low EITC utilization rates, with a focus on rural communities and communities with large populations of immigrant workers; and
- (C) expand Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site grants to increase free tax preparation services in low-income and rural communities.

(2) Community Development Financial Institutions.—The Secretary of the Treasury, acting through the CDFI Fund, shall expand certification and capitalization of Community Development Financial Institutions to increase access to affordable credit and financial services in low-income communities. Such expansion shall include—

- (A) increased CDFI Fund award amounts for institutions serving persistent-poverty counties;
- (B) technical assistance grants to support new CDFI applicants in States and territories with fewer than five certified institutions.

(g) Small Business Administration.—The Administrator of the Small Business Administration (hereinafter “the SBA Administrator”) shall administer entrepreneurship and small business support programs targeting low-income individuals as follows:

- (1) Microloan and Small Business Incubator Programs.—The SBA Administrator shall expand the SBA Microloan Program and Community Advantage Loan Program to increase access to startup and growth capital for low-income entrepreneurs, including—
 - (A) increasing the maximum individual microloan amount and extending permissible loan terms for borrowers operating in economically distressed communities;
 - (B) funding small business incubators and accelerators co-located with workforce training centers authorized under subsection (b) of this section; and
 - (C) providing mentorship and technical assistance through the SCORE program with priority outreach to entrepreneurs from households at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty line.

(h) Department of Transportation.—The Secretary of Transportation (hereinafter “the Transportation Secretary”) shall administer transportation access and infrastructure employment programs serving low-income communities as follows:

- (1) Public Transit Access.—The Transportation Secretary shall fund affordable public transit system expansion in underserved communities, including—
 - (A) capital grants for transit agencies to extend service routes into low-income neighborhoods with inadequate transit connectivity to employment centers;
 - (B) subsidized transit pass programs for eligible individuals enrolled in workforce development or employment programs authorized under this Act; and
 - (C) infrastructure employment initiatives that prioritize hiring individuals from households below the poverty line for Federally funded transportation construction and maintenance projects, in coordination with the Department of Labor.

(i) Department of Energy.—The Secretary of Energy (hereinafter “the Energy Secretary”) shall administer home energy assistance and clean energy workforce programs as follows:

- (1) Home Energy Assistance.—The Energy Secretary, in coordination with HHS, shall expand the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) to reduce energy cost burdens on low-income households, including—
 - (A) increasing WAP funding to weatherize an additional 100,000 low-income housing units per year, with priority given to units occupied by elderly or disabled residents;
 - (B) integrating clean energy technologies, including solar panels and heat pumps, into the WAP program to provide long-term energy cost reductions for eligible households.
- (2) Clean Energy Workforce Development.—The Energy Secretary shall, in coordination with the Department of Labor, fund clean energy workforce development programs

targeting low-income workers and communities transitioning from fossil fuel industries, including—

- (A) grants to community colleges and technical institutions to develop and deliver clean energy technology credentials aligned with regional employer demand; and
- (B) economic transition assistance for workers in coal, oil, and gas communities, including income support, retraining stipends, and relocation assistance for workers who must move to access new employment opportunities.

(j) Department of Commerce.—The Secretary of Commerce (hereinafter “the Commerce Secretary”) shall administer regional economic development and technology workforce programs as follows:

(1) **Regional Economic Development Zones.**—The Commerce Secretary, acting through the Economic Development Administration (EDA), shall establish regional economic development zones in areas with persistent poverty and high unemployment, providing—

- (A) investment grants for infrastructure, business development, and technology adoption in designated zones;
- (B) technology job training programs, co-administered with the Department of Labor, to connect low-income residents of designated zones to employment in information technology, cybersecurity, and data services sectors.

(k) Department of Veterans Affairs.—The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (hereinafter “the VA Secretary”) shall administer employment support, housing, and healthcare programs for low-income veterans as follows:

(1) **Veteran Employment Programs.**—The VA Secretary, in coordination with the Department of Labor, shall expand employment transition services for recently separated veterans from low-income households, including—

- (A) Transition Assistance Program (TAP) enhancements providing skills gap analysis and individualized career pathway counseling tied to regional labor market demand;
- (B) expanded Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program capacity, with reduced wait times for enrollment and increased funding for training-related expenses; and
- (C) employer tax credit outreach encouraging private sector hiring of veterans from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, coordinated with the IRS Work Opportunity Tax Credit program.

(l) Interagency Coordination Requirements.—Each agency assigned duties under this section shall comply with the following coordination requirements:

(1) **No-Duplication Certification.**—Prior to implementing any new program authorized under this section, each agency head shall certify to the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council that the proposed program does not duplicate an existing Federal program serving the same population, or shall provide a written justification for any overlap and an explanation of why a new program is preferable to expanding an existing one.

(2) **Data Sharing Agreements.**—Each agency shall enter into data sharing agreements with co-administering agencies to enable case management coordination and eliminate the need for individuals to re-apply for related benefits across multiple agencies. Such agreements shall comply with the Privacy Act of 1974 and applicable Federal data security standards.

(3) Equity and Accessibility Standards.—Each agency shall adopt program accessibility standards ensuring that all programs authorized under this section are available to eligible individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or limited English proficiency, consistent with applicable civil rights laws enforced by the Department of Justice.

SEC. 6. Educational Opportunity.

To expand educational access, attainment, and economic opportunity for low-income individuals from early childhood through postsecondary education, the Secretary of Education (hereinafter “the Secretary” for purposes of this section) shall carry out the following programs and activities:

(a) Pell Grant Expansion.—The Secretary shall increase the maximum Federal Pell Grant award by 25 percent above the maximum award amount provided in the most recent fiscal year preceding the date of enactment of this Act. In implementing this increase, the Secretary shall—

(1) index future annual Pell Grant maximum awards to the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) so that grant amounts maintain their purchasing power over time, subject to annual appropriations;

(2) expand outreach and application assistance programs targeting prospective students from households below 150 percent of the federal poverty line, including—

(A) grants to high schools and community organizations in persistent poverty counties to station dedicated FAFSA completion counselors who assist students and families through the application process at no cost;

(B) partnerships with community health centers, food banks, and workforce training centers to distribute Pell Grant eligibility information and provide on-site application assistance; and

(C) multilingual application materials and assistance services in all languages spoken by more than 1 percent of the eligible population in any State;

(3) simplify the Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA) for households in which all members receive one or more means-tested Federal benefits, including SNAP, Medicaid, TANF, or SSI, through automatic income verification via data-sharing agreements with relevant Federal agencies, subject to participant consent and the Privacy Act of 1974; and

(4) pilot year-round Pell Grant awards at not fewer than 100 community colleges and technical institutions in the first two years following enactment, allowing eligible students to receive Pell Grant support during summer sessions to accelerate completion of workforce credential programs and degree pathways.

(b) Early Childhood Education Expansion.—Federal funding authorized under this section shall support substantial expansion of early childhood education programs. The Secretary, in coordination with the Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall—

(1) expand Head Start and Early Head Start program funding with the goal of ensuring universal access to high-quality preschool education for all children aged 3 through 5 in households below the federal poverty line within 5 years of enactment, including—

(A) increasing per-child grant rates to reflect current regional cost-of-living indices, ensuring grantees can recruit and retain qualified early childhood educators at competitive wages;

(B) funding full-day, full-year program slots in communities where part-day programs currently operate, enabling greater parental workforce participation; and

(C) expanding Early Head Start enrollment for children from birth through age 3 in households below 130 percent of the federal poverty line, with priority for children whose parents are enrolled in workforce training programs authorized under SEC. 3;

(2) establish a Preschool Development Grant program providing competitive awards to States that—

(A) adopt quality rating and improvement systems for early childhood programs, requiring all publicly funded preschool programs to meet minimum standards for teacher qualifications, curriculum quality, and child-to-teacher ratios;

(B) coordinate early childhood education with nutrition services, health screenings, and developmental assessments to address the full spectrum of children’s needs; and

(C) demonstrate plans to sustain preschool program capacity beyond the initial Federal grant period through State or local funding commitments.

(c) K–12 Equity and Opportunity Programs.—The Secretary shall increase targeted support for K–12 students from low-income households, including—

(1) increased Title I, Part A formula funding for high-poverty schools, with a requirement that recipient local educational agencies demonstrate that Title I funds supplement, and do not supplant, State and local per-pupil funding at Title I schools;

(2) expanded funding for after-school and summer learning programs under the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, prioritizing schools in which 75 percent or more of students qualify for free or reduced-price meals; and

(3) grants to local educational agencies to establish or expand school-based student support hubs integrating academic tutoring, social-emotional learning, mental health counseling referrals, and basic needs assistance, recognizing that unmet basic needs are a significant driver of absenteeism and academic underperformance among low-income students.

(d) Community College and Workforce Education Partnerships.—The Secretary shall support community college workforce education initiatives that create direct pathways from low-income status to stable employment, including—

(1) competitive grants to community colleges that enter into formal workforce partnership agreements with regional employers in high-growth sectors identified under SEC. 3(b)(1), requiring such colleges to align curriculum with employer-validated competency frameworks and to track graduate employment outcomes by program;

(2) “last dollar” scholarship programs covering tuition and fees for eligible individuals enrolled in community college programs leading to high-demand credentials, after application of Pell Grant and other available aid; and

(3) student emergency assistance funds at community colleges and technical institutions providing grants of up to \$1,500 per student per academic year to cover unexpected expenses that might otherwise force a student to withdraw from their program, with institutions required to match Federal funds on a 1-to-1 basis from institutional or philanthropic sources.

SEC. 7. Program Coordination and Oversight.

To ensure coordinated, efficient, and accountable implementation of programs authorized under this Act, the following coordination structure and oversight mechanisms are hereby established:

(a) Establishment of the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council.—There is hereby established the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council (hereinafter “the Council”).

(1) Membership.—The Council shall be composed of the following members, or their designees of equivalent rank—

- (A) the Secretary of Health and Human Services, who shall serve as Chair;
- (B) the Secretary of Labor;
- (C) the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development;
- (D) the Secretary of Education;
- (E) the Secretary of Agriculture;
- (F) the Secretary of Energy;
- (G) the Secretary of Commerce;
- (H) the Secretary of Transportation;
- (I) the Secretary of Veterans Affairs;
- (J) the Administrator of the Small Business Administration;
- (K) the Director of the Office of Management and Budget; and
- (L) the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, in an advisory capacity.

(2) Duties.—The Council shall—

- (A) meet not less than quarterly to review program implementation, evaluate outcomes data, coordinate funding allocations, and resolve interagency conflicts;
- (B) establish, within 180 days of enactment, a unified national poverty reduction data dashboard accessible to the public, displaying real-time program enrollment figures, expenditures, and outcome metrics for each program authorized under this Act, updated not less than quarterly;
- (C) report to Congress not less than annually on progress toward achieving the national poverty reduction targets established in SEC. 2(b)(6), with the first report due not later than 18 months following enactment; and
- (D) publish an annual report on the Council’s activities, findings, program performance, and recommendations for legislative or administrative action, made publicly available on the websites of all member agencies and transmitted to the relevant committees of both Houses of Congress.

(3) Staff and Resources.—The Chair shall designate an Executive Director of the Council, compensated at a rate not to exceed Level III of the Executive Schedule. The Council shall be supported by a permanent staff of not fewer than 15 full-time employees, funded from amounts appropriated under SEC. 9, and may engage detailees from member agencies.

(4) Advisory Committee.—The Council shall establish an advisory committee composed of not more than 25 members from outside the Federal Government, including representatives of State and local governments, Tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, academic researchers specializing in poverty policy, private sector employers, and individuals with lived experience of poverty. The advisory committee shall meet not less than twice annually and shall provide recommendations to the Council on program design, implementation, and evaluation.

(b) State and Local Partnership Compacts.—The Council shall develop, within 12 months of enactment, a model Poverty Reduction Partnership Compact that State and local governments may voluntarily execute with the Federal Government. Such compacts shall—

- (1) establish joint Federal-State-local poverty reduction targets and timetables;
- (2) provide for streamlined Federal grant administration, allowing States and localities that execute a compact to apply for multiple Federal poverty reduction program grants through a unified application process; and
- (3) include performance incentive payments from the Council to compact jurisdictions that achieve or exceed agreed poverty reduction milestones, funded from amounts reserved under SEC. 9.

SEC. 8. Evaluation and Reporting.

This section establishes comprehensive Federal program reporting requirements, independent evaluation mandates, compliance monitoring procedures, and public transparency obligations designed to ensure that programs authorized under this Act achieve measurable reductions in the national poverty rate and provide accountable stewardship of Federal funds.

(a) Agency Annual Performance Reports.—Each coordinating agency shall submit annual performance reports to the Congress and to the Council detailing the results of all programs under its jurisdiction authorized by this Act. Reports shall be submitted not later than 90 days following the conclusion of each Federal fiscal year and shall include—

- (1) total program expenditures, disaggregated by program, funding category, and State;
- (2) the total number of individuals and households served, disaggregated by program, geographic region, and the demographic characteristics of race, ethnicity, age, disability status, and primary language;
- (3) program outcomes achieved relative to established performance benchmarks, including data on employment rates, wage levels, educational attainment, housing stability, health outcomes, and other metrics specified in each program’s authorizing subsection;
- (4) cost-per-participant and cost-per-outcome analyses for each program, to enable comparison of cost-effectiveness across program types and delivery models;
- (5) a description of any significant implementation challenges encountered during the reporting period and the corrective actions taken or planned in response; and
- (6) evidence-based recommendations for program improvements, including proposals for statutory modifications where program performance data indicate that existing statutory requirements are impeding effectiveness.

(b) Government Accountability Office Evaluations.—The Comptroller General of the United States shall conduct independent evaluations of programs authorized under this Act. Such evaluations shall be conducted in accordance with the following requirements—

- (1) the Comptroller General shall conduct a comprehensive evaluation of each major program authorized under this Act at intervals not exceeding 3 years from the date of initial program implementation;
- (2) each evaluation shall assess, at minimum—
 - (A) program effectiveness in reducing poverty and improving economic mobility among participants, using both quantitative outcome data and qualitative assessments of participant experience;
 - (B) cost-efficiency and cost-benefit ratios compared to alternative program designs and to relevant international benchmarks;
 - (C) equity of program access and outcomes across racial, ethnic, geographic, gender, age, and disability subgroups, with specific attention to whether programs

are effectively reaching persistent poverty counties and other historically underserved communities; and

(D) alignment with evidence-based practices and the degree to which program design reflects current research on effective poverty reduction interventions; and

(3) the Comptroller General shall submit the results of each evaluation to the relevant committees of both Houses of Congress and to the Council not later than 60 days after completing the evaluation, and shall make all evaluation reports publicly available on the GAO website.

(c) Program Inspectors General Oversight.—The Inspector General of each coordinating agency shall—

(1) conduct annual risk assessments of programs authorized under this Act within the agency’s jurisdiction, identifying vulnerabilities to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement;

(2) investigate complaints of waste, fraud, or abuse in programs authorized by this Act reported through agency hotlines, the Council, or referrals from program administrators; and

(3) submit semi-annual reports to Congress and to the Council summarizing audit and investigative findings, amounts recovered or recommended for recovery, and systemic corrective actions recommended or implemented.

SEC. 9. Appropriations and Budgetary Provisions.

This section establishes the funding authority, budget framework, and fiscal discipline requirements necessary to carry out the programs and activities authorized under this Act on a sustained, fully funded, and fiscally responsible basis.

(a) Authorization of Appropriations.—There are authorized to be appropriated such sums as may be necessary to carry out this Act for fiscal years 2026 through 2031. Authorized amounts shall include—

(1) program-specific funding for each activity authorized under SEC. 3 through SEC. 6, as set forth in annual appropriations acts;

(2) administrative and coordination funding for the National Poverty Reduction Coordinating Council established under SEC. 7, not to exceed 1 percent of total program appropriations in any fiscal year; and

(3) an evaluation and research reserve of not less than 0.5 percent of total program appropriations in each fiscal year, designated for GAO evaluations, program impact studies, and data collection activities required under SEC. 8.

(b) Five-Year Budget Framework.—The Director of the Office of Management and Budget shall develop and submit to Congress, within 180 days of enactment, a five-year budget framework projecting funding requirements for each program authorized herein. Such framework shall—

(1) project annual funding needs for each program by fiscal year 2026 through 2031, with underlying assumptions clearly stated;

(2) identify specific offsetting savings, new revenue sources, or deficit-neutral financing mechanisms sufficient to fully fund program authorizations over the five-year window, including—

- (A) projected long-term fiscal savings from reduced poverty, including decreased expenditures on emergency healthcare, correctional services, homelessness assistance, and income support programs attributable to program participation;
- (B) increased Federal tax revenues projected to result from higher employment and earnings among program participants; and
- (C) any additional revenue measures or spending reductions necessary to achieve full funding within the budget window; and

(3) be updated and resubmitted to Congress annually as part of the President's budget request, incorporating the most recent program performance data and revised cost projections.

(c) Supplement, Not Supplant.—Federal funding provided under this Act shall supplement, and shall not supplant, existing Federal, State, and local funding for programs serving persons below the poverty line. In enforcing this requirement—

- (1) the Director of OMB shall establish guidelines within 90 days of enactment to prevent duplication of services and ensure that Federal investments achieve maximum impact through coordination with existing programmatic infrastructure at the State and local level;
- (2) each coordinating agency shall, as a condition of grant awards under this Act, require recipients to certify in writing that State and local funding for covered programs has not been reduced below the levels maintained in the fiscal year preceding receipt of Federal funds under this Act; and
- (3) recipients that fail to maintain required funding levels shall be required to repay Federal funds equal to the amount of the State or local funding reduction, as determined by the relevant coordinating agency following notice and an opportunity to respond.

(d) Congressional Commitment and Findings on Fiscal Impact.—The Congress finds that—

- (1) the costs of poverty to the Federal budget, including expenditures on Medicaid, housing assistance, food assistance, correctional systems, and lost tax revenue, substantially exceed the projected costs of the programs authorized by this Act;
- (2) sustained investment in poverty reduction programs, when implemented with rigorous accountability and evidence-based program design, represents a sound fiscal commitment that generates measurable long-term returns to the Federal Government and to the economy as a whole; and
- (3) this Act represents a commitment by the Congress of the United States to pursue measurable, sustained reductions in the national poverty rate through evidence-based policy investment, rigorous interagency coordination, transparent performance accountability, and genuine partnership with State and local governments, Tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and the communities and individuals whose lives this Act is designed to improve.