



**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***  
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## **FPWA Report Shows How Poverty to Prison Pipeline Drives Low-Income New Yorkers into Criminal Justice System**

*FPWA Task Force to Work with City Officials to Adopt Programs and Policies to Interrupt the Pipeline and Better Assist Justice-Involved Individuals and Families*

**(New York, NY)** — If you are poor in New York City – especially if you are a low-income person of color – there’s an increased likelihood that you will be drawn into the criminal justice system. And once justice-involved, climbing out of poverty becomes harder. A mechanism is already in place, however, that can help interrupt this pipeline –human service organizations.

This is the finding of a [new report](#) released today by FPWA’s Ending the Poverty to Prison Pipeline Task Force. The report outlines steps New York City must take to address the cycle of poverty and criminalization of low-income New Yorkers and the critical role that those organizations already providing services to these individuals, families and communities could play.

The report, a culmination of months of research and engagement with nearly 100 leaders from community-based organizations, academia, faith communities, government, as well as criminal justice system-impacted individuals, analyzes the intersections of race, poverty, and the criminal justice system. FPWA’s original analysis found that seven of the ten poorest community districts are also among the ten districts with the highest jail incarceration rates. The report goes on to advance a set of programmatic and policy recommendations to better support justice-involved individuals and families in New York City.

According to FPWA, New York City should be doing more to support New Yorkers who are justice-involved, including those who are formerly incarcerated and those with parole, probation, and community supervision. These individuals and their families struggle with access to housing, employment, educational opportunities, and meeting health and mental health needs and experience a patchwork of services that are under-resourced and not targeted to meet the complex challenges that come before, during, and after justice involvement. The result is a continuing cycle of poverty and incarceration that has a devastating impact on families for generations.

“If we are serious about ending mass incarceration, if we want to disrupt systems that criminalize the poor, we must better utilize and resource the organizations that are already providing critical services to New Yorkers in these communities,” said **Jennifer Jones Austin, FPWA CEO and Executive Director**. “Systemic racism drives both poverty and the mass incarceration of low-



income people, especially people of color. This cycle of poverty and criminal justice involvement feeds on itself and creates herculean barriers to achieving economic and social advancement, for those who have been justice involved and for their loved ones. There are proven ways to support communities experiencing high levels of poverty, income insecurity and incarceration. Human services organizations are a key part of those solutions.”

The report’s policy and programmatic recommendations call on the City, health and human service organizations and community and faith leaders to join forces to:

- Coordinate services and build a continuum of care to better support low-income and justice-involved clients and their families;
- Strengthen health and mental health by implementing citywide trauma-informed training and services;
- Strengthen education and workforce development opportunities and training to address the specific barriers encountered by justice-involved individuals;
- De-stigmatize poverty and justice involvement through trainings and public awareness campaigns and by including justice-involved people as an affected group within Gender, Racial and Other Equity Impact Assessments conducted by the City.

“I thank the Ending Poverty to Prison Pipeline Task Force for their thoughtful examination of the role that justice involvement plays in the persistent challenges our City faces, **said First Deputy Mayor Dean Fuleihan** on the report’s release. “We are committed to working with the coalition and with providers to drive towards improvements that better coordinate our work, continue to strengthen health and mental health services, and strengthen educational opportunities in a manner that acknowledges the context of justice involvement and related trauma, and the reality of the shadows these challenges cast on our communities.”

“I applaud FPWA and the Ending the Poverty to Prison Pipeline Task Force for identifying programs and policies that will impact critical areas at the intersection of poverty and criminal justice, **Manhattan D.A. Cy Vance, Jr. said.** “Their report outlines an integrative approach to improving coordination of mental health and physical health care and human services, educational support and workforce development, and ending the stigma around justice involvement. These recommendations will combat the underlying cycles associated with justice involvement and align with the work of my Office’s Criminal Justice Investment Initiative (CJII) to strengthen communities and accelerate reform in the justice system through collaborations with community-based providers and city and state partners. I am proud to support FPWA on this forward-thinking endeavor, and I thank them and the members of the Task Force for their commitment to addressing drivers of unnecessary incarceration and the needs of justice-involved individuals.”



“New York City is committed to disrupting the self-perpetuating connection between poverty and justice-involvement for families and communities across New York City,” **said Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Dr. Herminia Palacio.** “I commend FPWA for elevating justice-involved issues as central to the critical work we must do to reduce poverty.”

“We need more resources, more compassion, and more political will to end the poverty to prison pipeline. We must also recognize the role of intergenerational trauma in creating the pipeline and provide mental health and trauma-informed services to those who are justice-impacted. As recommended in the report, let’s create a “trauma-informed New York,” where health and human service providers, managed care companies, policymakers, governmental agencies, and community and faith leaders, have the tools to effectively work together to solve this crisis,” **said Michael A. Lindsey, Ph.D., MSW, MPH, Executive Director of the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University.**

**Stanley Richards, Executive Vice President of the Fortune Society, stated:** “The Ending the Poverty to Prison Pipeline Task Force developed this report to offer service providers, City government partners, and the larger human services sector ways to effectively serve low-income, disenfranchised, and justice-involved New Yorkers and their families. As a member of this Task Force, I am extremely proud of the bold way this report calls our collective attention to the root causes of the Poverty to Prison Pipeline. The report offers the field a collective way of working our way out of the damage that the existing system currently perpetuates. We have an opportunity to name the drivers of mass incarceration, such as poverty, policing, racism, and trauma, that we all know operate in poor communities of color, as well as to implement a comprehensive response to end the Poverty to Prison Pipeline.”

“The statistics around the poverty to prison pipeline and mass incarceration can be paralyzing: “40% of crimes are attributed to poverty and 80% of incarcerated persons identified as low income.” We must all work together from community-based organizations, governmental agencies, policymakers, and the public to stop this cycle. Community-based organizations have been on the ground for years directly supporting the families affected by incarceration. By partnering and listening to the organizations on the front line, we can best identify how to work together to not only alleviate the hardships our families endure but effectively disrupt the poverty to prison pipeline,” **said Sharon Content, Founder & President of Children of Promise, NYC.**

**The Ending the Poverty to Prison Pipeline** report was made possible by a grant from the Ford Foundation.

To read the report, click [here](#).

**Jennifer Jones Austin, FPWA CEO and Executive Director,** is available for comment or interview.



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## About FPWA

FPWA is an anti-poverty policy and advocacy organization committed to advancing economic opportunity and upward mobility for low-income New Yorkers. Having a prominent New York presence for nearly 100 years, FPWA has long served New York City's social service sector, providing grants to help individuals and families meet their basic needs, and advocating for fair public policies on behalf of people in need and the agencies that serve them. FPWA's member network of 170 human-service and faith-based organizations reach more than 1.5 million people in New York's communities each year. Join us at [fpwa.org](http://fpwa.org), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#).