



## **2020 Community Agenda**

### **1. Reduce the Disparate Impact of Traffic Fines and Fees**

Buffalo Common Council should repeal its July 2018 amendment to Chapter 175 of the Code of the City of Buffalo that added 13 new fees under the Buffalo Traffic Violations Agency. Each year, thousands of Buffalo residents risk losing their driver's licenses, their jobs, their homes, and even their freedom because they cannot afford to pay traffic fines and associated fees. Data shows that residents of color are disproportionately stopped and ticketed, creating a cycle of debt and punishment in their communities.

Leading partners: Western New York Law Center, Fines and Fees Justice Center, African American Health Disparities Task Force, WNY Peace Center & Interfaith Peace Network, 1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East & The Healthcare Education Project, National Federation of Just Communities of WNY

### **2. Implement a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program**

The Buffalo Police Department should implement a Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program to reduce arrests and racial disparities, in partnership with the City of Buffalo, the Erie County District Attorney, the Erie County Departments of Health and Mental Health, and community organizations. LEAD gives police officers an alternative to arrest in incidents driven by poverty, mental health, or substance use and prevents harm to individuals in need of services.

Leading partners: Evergreen Health, Back to Basics Ministries, VOICE-Buffalo, WNY Peace Center, Crisis Services

### **3. Declare a Climate Emergency in Buffalo and Erie County**

Buffalo Common Council and the Erie County Legislature should declare a climate emergency, joining nearly 1,200 local governments worldwide in recognizing the threat of climate change. This is a key first step in enacting local policies that align with New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, adopted in 2019, and that invest in renewable energy, create fair green jobs, provide economic support for frontline communities, and further strengthen Buffalo Niagara's climate resiliency.

Leading partners: WNY Youth Climate Council, WNY Environmental Alliance, Sierra Club Niagara Group, Interfaith Climate Justice Community, PUSH Buffalo, Massachusetts Avenue Project, Wild Spirit Education, Sunrise Movement – Buffalo Hub, Pollinator Conservation Association, Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve, Buffalo-Niagara Waterkeeper

#### **4. A State Park on the Outer Harbor**

New York State should make Buffalo's Outer Harbor a state park to protect the Lake Erie shoreline for all people. While proposed housing development on the Outer Harbor would decrease public access and make our coast less climate resilient, a world-class waterfront park would ensure equitable public access, healthy recreation, and climate resilience in perpetuity. It would also enhance and connect our natural and cultural assets including Tiff and Times Beach Nature Preserves, the Niagara River Greenway, and the Olmsted parks and parkways.

Leading partners: WNY Environmental Alliance, Our Outer Harbor, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Park on the Outer Harbor, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, Friends of Times Beach Nature Preserve, Preservation Buffalo Niagara, Sierra Club, Wellness Institute of Greater Buffalo, League of Women Voters Buffalo Niagara, Designing to Live Sustainably, Pollinator Conservation Association

#### **5. Equitable Financing for Water Bills for Low Income Individuals**

The Buffalo Water Board should develop programs and policies to ensure more equitable financing and rate structures for low income individuals who are unable to pay their water bills. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 Buffalo residents each year have their water turned off because of nonpayment of water bills; some residents of our city then live without water for months. More equitable policies will assist individuals living with disabilities, fixed incomes, or life emergencies that preclude them from paying their water bills.

Leading partner: Western New York Law Center

#### **6. Just Cause Eviction**

Buffalo Common Council should pass a Just Cause Eviction law to add protections for tenants. A Just Cause policy can limit a landlord's ability to evict a tenant or dramatically raise the rent without an adequate reason. Tenants with children, elders, or people with disabilities are especially vulnerable to wrongful evictions and poor housing conditions. Buffalo's tenants currently have very few protections against eviction, which makes them reluctant to challenge landlords on the habitability of the places they rent.

Leading partners: People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH) Buffalo, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Public Accountability Initiative, UB School of Law Community Justice Clinic, Queen City Socialists, Upstate Downstate Housing Alliance

## **7. Improve Language Access and Inclusion in Western New York**

Erie County should demonstrate its commitment to inclusion and diversity for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) by passing a county-wide, comprehensive language access law, mandating the development of department-specific LEP plans, practices, and training. This will ensure that all residents of Erie County have equal access to medical care, government services, civic participation, education and training, jobs, and public safety services.

Leading partners: Language Access Working Group - New York Immigration Coalition, International Institute of Buffalo, Journey's End, Burmese Community Services, Center for Elder Law and Justice, University at Buffalo School of Social Work, Catholic Charities

## **8. Dedicate New Sources of Funding to Expand and Improve Public Transportation**

New York State should dedicate revenues from the upcoming Transit and Climate Initiative (TCI) carbon tax to expand and improve public transportation. Erie County should establish a new source of dedicated, sustainable transit funding, such as an added line item in the allocation of property taxes. These measures build on the passage of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act in New York State, by reducing carbon emissions and increasing equity through better bus service that improves access to jobs, education, and healthcare.

Leading partner: Citizens for Regional Transit

## **9. Good Food Purchasing for Buffalo Schools**

The Buffalo Public Schools should continue to work toward adopting a Good Food Purchasing Program. This will align public dollars with public values through a national model, the Good Food Purchasing Program, in which public institutions change their buying guidelines. It will ensure that more public money stays in the local economy; students eat fresher, less processed food; jobs throughout the food system are safer and better paying; fewer animals are mistreated or harmed; and greenhouse gas emissions and air, soil, and water pollution are reduced.

Leading partners: Good Food Buffalo Coalition - including Massachusetts Avenue Project, African Heritage Food Coop, Buffalo Parent Teacher Organization, Buffalo Teacher Federation, UB Food Lab, Urban Fruits and Veggies, WNY Area Labor Federation, WNY Council on Occupational Health and Safety, Grassroots Gardens, Ujima Company

## **10. Equitable and Increased Representation of Frontline Communities in City of Buffalo Public Art**

The City of Buffalo should verify that it is holding capital improvement projects to Chapter 409-3 of the City of Buffalo Code, requiring projects in excess of \$1 million put aside 1% of the total budgeted construction and design cost to create, repair, and maintain works of public art. The City should take these steps:

- a) Create an amendment to ensure that public art funds from the Arts Commission and its Art in Public Places Committee are accessible to frontline arts organizations;
- b) Increase representation on both committees from frontline arts communities;
- c) Update the catalog of the City's art collection (last updated in 2004);
- d) Lower the capital improvement project threshold to \$500,000;
- e) Increase transparency around the oversight of this funding.

Leading partners: Frontline Arts Buffalo – Ujima Company, Locust Street Art, El Museo, African American Cultural Center, Arts Services Initiative, Burchfield Penney Art Center



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617 Main Street, Suite 300  
Buffalo, New York 14203