

# **Policy Solutions for COVID-19 Response and Recovery**

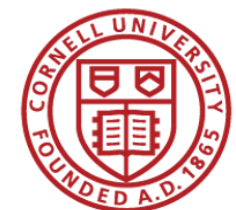
April 30, 2020 | 3:30-5:00pm

**Public policies that address long-term inequalities are critical for COVID-19 recovery.**

Join us to discuss what we need for long-term recovery across housing, food, water, economy and employment, education, jails and justice, and voting and government transparency.



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# Today's issue areas:

- Housing
- Water
- Food
- Jails and Justice
- Economy and Workers
- Civic Participation and Government Transparency

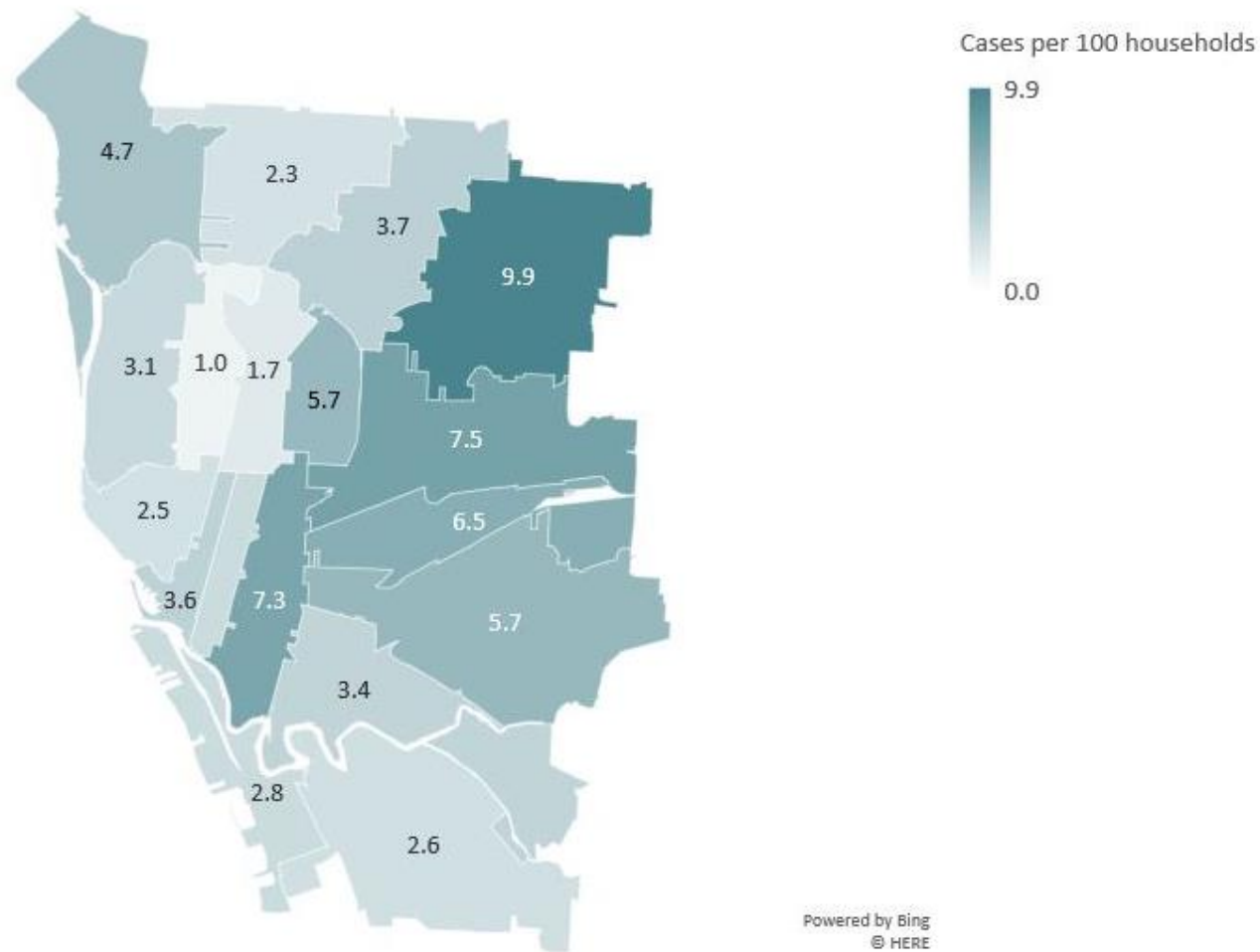
## **In each area:**

- What policies have already changed?
- What do we still need?
  - Short-term recovery + long-term equity
- Partner examples, concerns
- Questions and Comments

# Housing

# 8,530 eviction cases, 4,383 eviction warrants in 2017

Eviction Cases Per 100 Renter Households Represented by NLS or VLP in 2017  
by Zip Code



Zip Code	Cases per 100 households
14201	2.5
14202	3.6
14203	2.8
14204	7.3
14206	5.7
14207	4.7
14208	5.7
14209	1.7
14210	3.4
14211	7.5
14212	6.5
14213	3.1
14214	3.7
14215	9.9
14216	2.3
14220	2.6
14222	1.0

# What's already changed?

- Moratorium on Evictions
  - [NYS level](#) – for ALL tenants through June 20
  - [Federal level](#) – for some tenants through July 24
- **\*\*If tenant facing eviction before June 20 (illegal), contact Neighborhood Legal Services 716-847-0650 for free legal help\*\***
- Limited Mortgage Relief

Monday		Tuesday	
1	2	3	
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		17	
15	16		25
		24	
	23		
22		31	



# What do we still need?

The Rent and Mortgage Cancellation Bill – Rep. Ilhan Omar [HR6515](#)

- Cancels rent and mortgage from April 1 until emergency ends
- Funds for landlords and lenders
- Funds for creation of affordable housing
- Support it here:

<https://homesguarantee.com/cancelrent/>

# What do we still need? (continued)

- Just Cause Eviction legislation (NYS or municipal level)
- Clean Hands Eviction legislation (municipal level)
- For more policy recommendations, see our [2020 Evictions Report](#)

**Spotlight:  
PUSH Buffalo rent relief,  
rental assistance, and  
landlord negotiations**

# Water

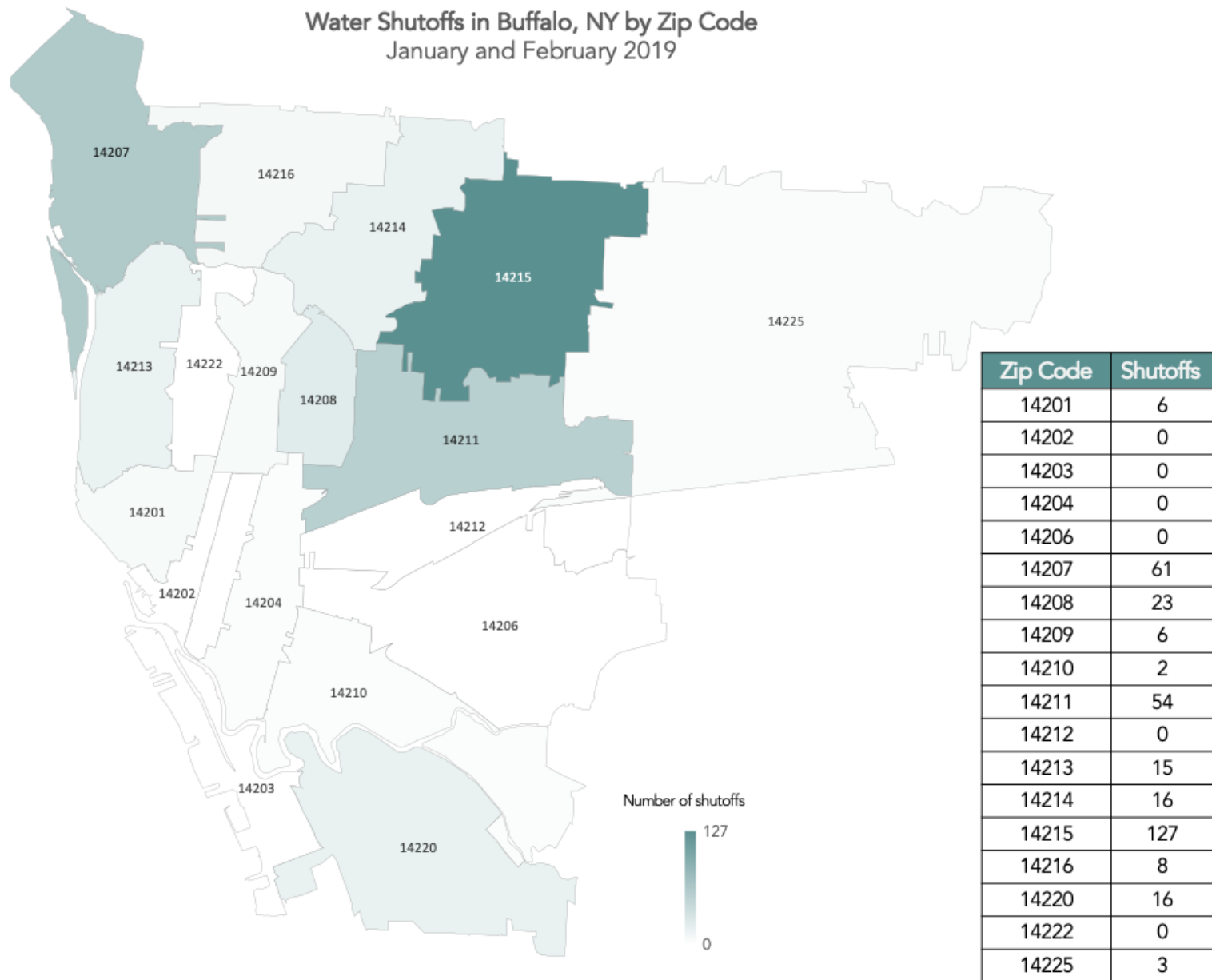
# 17,690 shut-offs for nonpayment, Jan. 2015 – April 2019

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
<b>2015</b>	87	33	0	342	223	344	368	433	367	383	344	433	3357
<b>2016</b>	308	282	473	576	693	542	425	430	375	372	265	261	5002
<b>2017</b>	292	504	425	337	421	372	251	399	223	294	375	185	4078
<b>2018</b>	56	361	400	604	523	336	278	309	281	383	384	216	4131
<b>2019</b>	200	313	282	327									1122
<b>Avg. Not inc. 2019</b>	186	295	325	465	465	399	331	393	312	358	342	274	4142

# What's already changed?

- Buffalo Water suspended shut-offs for nonpayment
- Turning on customers at no cost
- Stopped accrual of interest, late fees

## Water Shutoffs in Buffalo, NY by Zip Code January and February 2019



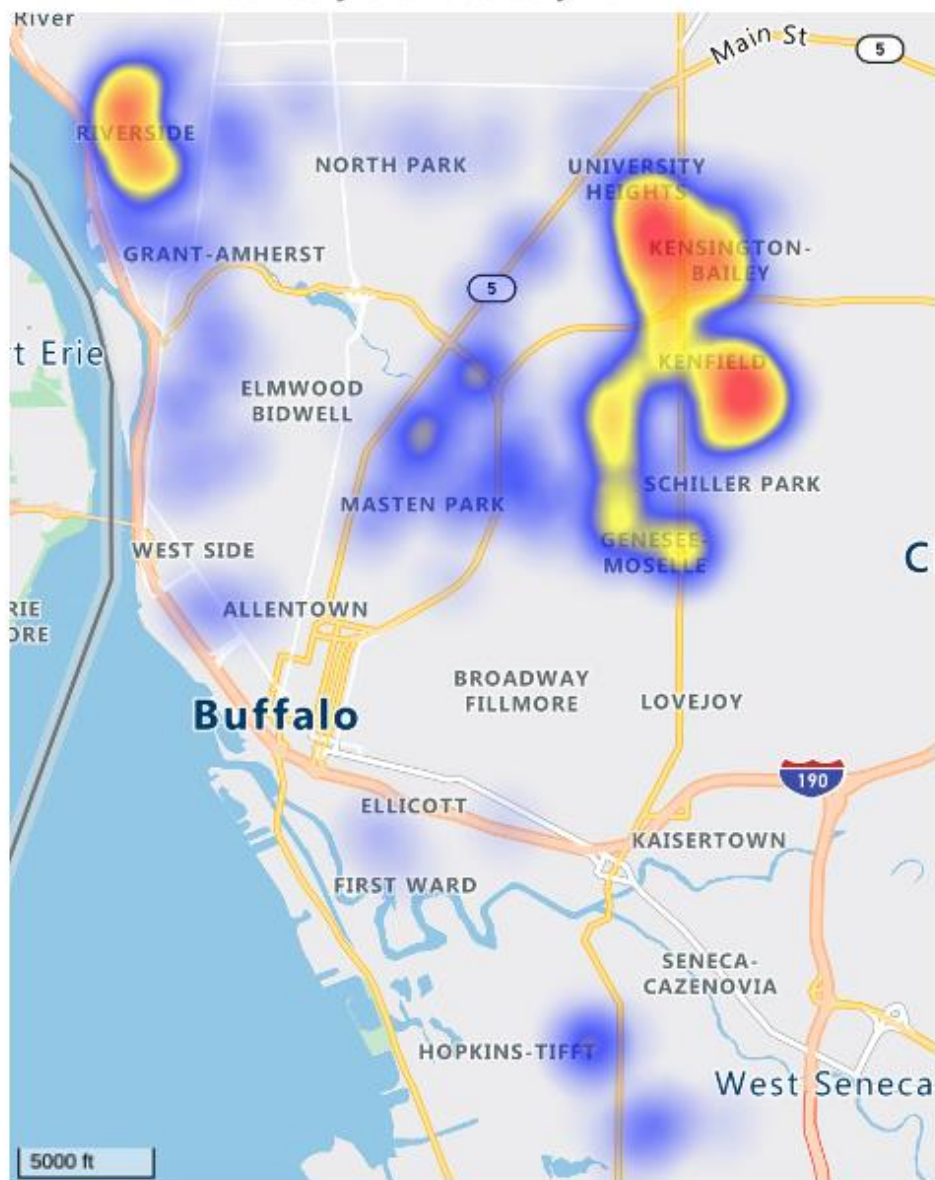
This map shows the frequency of shutoffs of occupied homes in Buffalo, New York January and February 2019 by zip code. The dataset represents 340 properties. The darker the shading, the more shutoffs.



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## Water Shutoffs in Buffalo, NY by Zip Code January and February 2019



This heat map shows density of shutoffs of occupied homes in Buffalo, New York January and February 2019. The dataset represents 340 properties.

Data were collected through FOIL requests to the Buffalo Water Board by the Western New York Law Center. It is located in the "Turn Off for Nonpayment Worksheet" forms, a tool used by Department of Public Works employees to document shutoffs and pertinent shutoff related information.



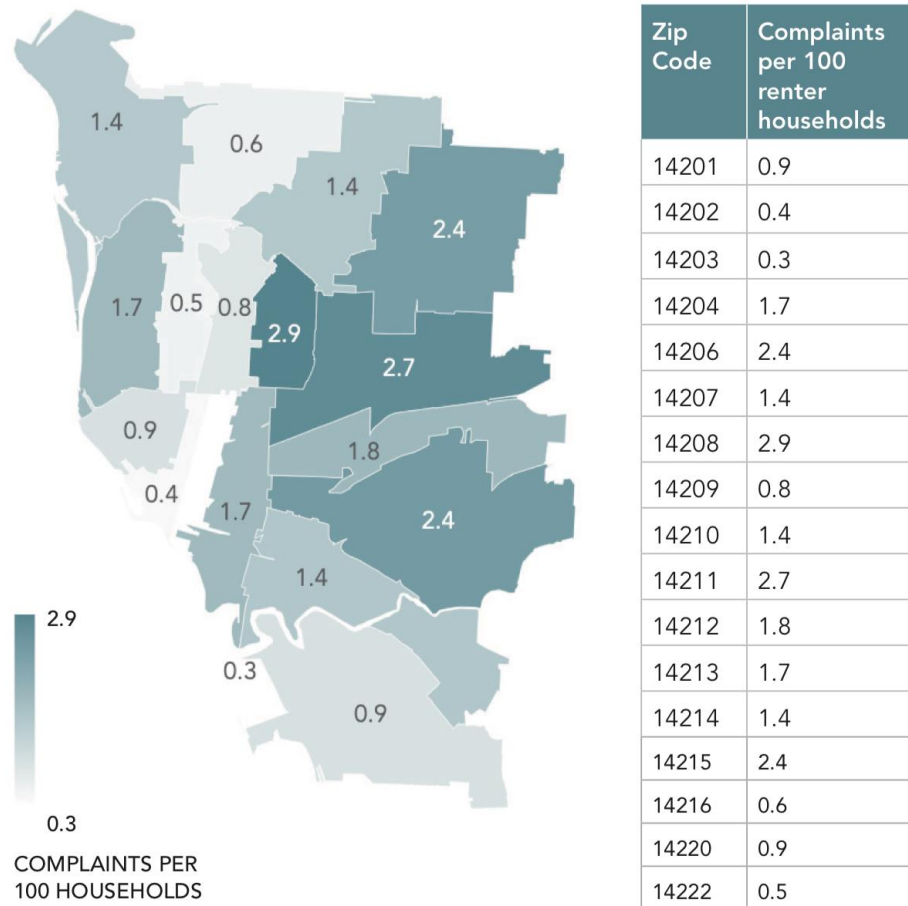
# What do we still need?

- Guiding principle: “Ensure water is reliable and affordable for all” ([US Water Alliance](#))
- Long-term suspension of shut-offs for nonpayment
- More equitable financing, rate structure for low-income individuals
- Transparency – how many homes are still without water (nonpayment vs. structural)?

# What do we still need (continued)?

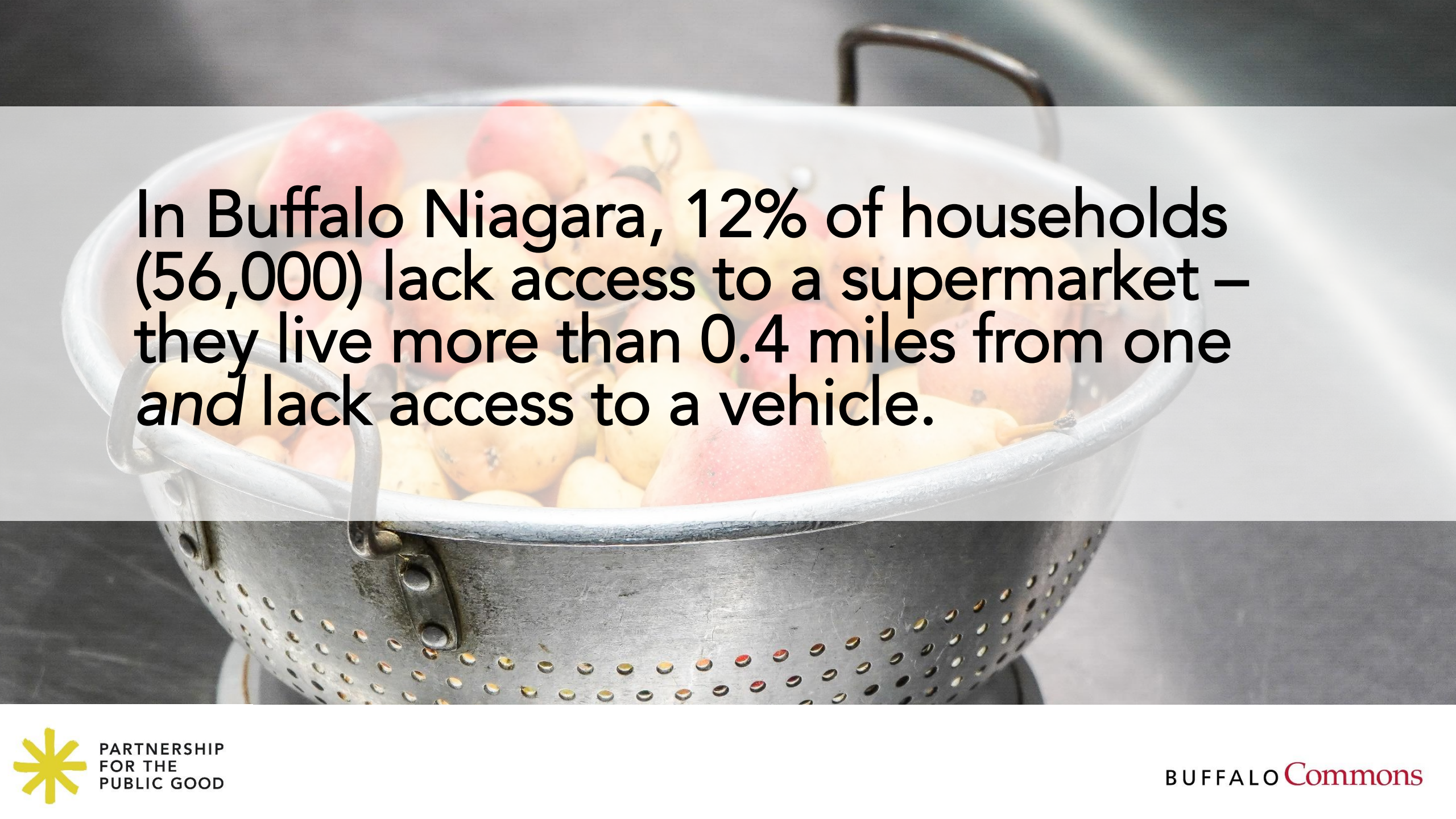
- Plumbing, home repair funds (flexible, less restricted)

INTERIOR COMPLAINTS PER 100 RENTER HOUSEHOLDS BY ZIP CODE IN 2017



**Spotlight:  
Testimony from  
client without water  
for 16 months**

# Food

A close-up photograph of a silver metal colander filled with fresh fruit, including red and yellow apples and pears. The colander is perforated with small holes and has a handle. The background is a dark, out-of-focus surface.

In Buffalo Niagara, 12% of households (56,000) lack access to a supermarket – they live more than 0.4 miles from one *and* lack access to a vehicle.

# What's already changed?

- [Seeding Resilience](#): Building a community food system to address food inequities in our region exacerbated by COVID-19 in sectors such as
  - Growing
  - Distributing
  - Processing
  - Transportation
  - Community engagement
- Recognizing that we have the food resources in our region, but that they need to be organized in an equitable manner

# What do we still need?

- Policies at local, state, and national levels that guarantee worker health and safety
- Food chain jobs make up 7 of the 10 lowest paid jobs in the country
- All workers need paid sick and family leave, access to PPE, and safe working conditions
- Farmworkers need to be paid hourly and not at a piece-rate basis

# **Spotlight: Fruit Belt community outreach and need**



# Jails and Justice

# What's already changed?

- Jail population has decreased:
  - Down by about 80 since March, now 520 individuals in county jails
  - This is around half of what it was before changes to bail in September 2018
- 17 sentenced people were released early
- About 33 people had bail reduced or eliminated
- Only 4 people with technical violations have been released
- Arrests are down, fewer people entering jail

# What do we still need?

- Release or furlough (temporary release) for elderly, pregnant or at-risk inmates
- Release to supervision pretrial defendants or people who have served 60-90 days of a sentence
- Utilize emergency county funds for basic needs
- Test more inmates for the virus
- Allow social distancing, PPE and hygiene within jails

**Spotlight:  
Reduce the jail  
population in the  
long-term**

# Economy and Workers

# What's already changed?

- Unemployment Insurance-waiting period waived & extended; changes to filing
- Paid sick leave—NYS expansion guarantees job-protected paid leave to workers ([here](#) and [here](#)); federal government has a program—learn more [here](#).
- Special Enrollment Period for NY State of Health available through May 15
- CARES Act SBA Loans
- Work from Home

# What do we still need?

- Provide Emergency Fiscal Support for Non-Profits (another massive COVID-19 package); expanded access to PPP (which is no longer available after this last round)
- Pro-worker, High Road labor standards
  - Considerations for transition off unemployment
  - Living Wages
- Expand paid sick leave and family leave and eliminate sick leave carve outs: Domestic workers -- nannies, elder care, housecleaners -- whose workplace is someone's home are currently excluded.
- **Push for freelance labor protections:** If they are classified as independent contractors they will not have any unemployment insurance coverage, paid sick leave or health care coverage.
- **Up-to-Date Resources on Economy and Work in NYS:** Cornell ILR COVID-19-  
[-https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/work-and-coronavirus](https://www.ilr.cornell.edu/work-and-coronavirus)

# Reopening Economy/Reimagining Work

- Enforceable measures for frontline workers (not there yet)
- Increase of Workplace Health and Safety Measures, particularly for frontline workers (not there yet) including proper protective gear and limiting exposure
- Policies for at-risk populations (can't ask/survey employees)- can't discriminate, but need to develop options for self-identified vulnerable populations
  - Consider work from home option (until vaccine)
- Making tests free and convenient



# **Spotlight: Impact on artists and arts organizations**

ASI surveyed 178 artists and arts organizations: current total loss of revenue/income is \$2,532,576; total anticipated loss of income is \$4,459,319.

[Link](#) to WNY Arts Emergency Relief Fund

# Civic Participation and Government Transparency

# What's already changed?

- Buffalo Common Council [meeting virtually](#)
- Comment on meeting items by emailing [councilstaff@city-buffalo.com](mailto:councilstaff@city-buffalo.com)
- Erie County Legislature meeting virtually
- Voting by Absentee Ballot for Primary and General Election
- Census deadline extended

# What do we still need?

- Stronger Open Meeting Laws
- Long-term virtual participation in Council and Legislature meetings after reopening



# Questions and Discussion

# **Learn more about / join advocacy efforts:**

- Housing – [sarah@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:sarah@ppgbuffalo.org)
- Water – [andrea@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:andrea@ppgbuffalo.org)
- Food – [jgilber@buffalo.edu](mailto:jgilber@buffalo.edu)
- Jails and Justice – [colleen@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:colleen@ppgbuffalo.org)
- Economy and Workers – [ks844@cornell.edu](mailto:ks844@cornell.edu)
- Arts and Cultural – [Zainab@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:Zainab@ppgbuffalo.org)
- Civics / Government – [orlando@ppgbuffalo.org](mailto:orlando@ppgbuffalo.org)

# **Vote: What Policy Areas to Cover in Part 2?**

- K-12 Education
- Higher Education
- Health
- Transit
- Language Access
- Environment
- Other?