

# AN AMERICA WITHOUT POVERTY IS POSSIBLE: GCPI's Agenda for Economic Well-Being

The American story of poverty is familiar to too many. It's a story of hitting roadblocks with dire consequences at every turn, where a missed paycheck from a volatile job can quickly turn into power shut-offs and empty refrigerators. Today, millions of Americans still live below the poverty line, and more than one in eight children experienced poverty in 2023.

Our American story of escaping poverty through hard work, saving up, and climbing the economic ladder is more myth than reality. But another story is possible.

## Our Mission & Approach

The Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality is a research center that generates policy solutions to improve the lives of people experiencing poverty in the United States. Collaborating with government and movement leaders, we provide timely, evidenced-based ideas to impact decision-making, increase economic well-being, and advance racial and gender equity.

***An America Without Poverty Is Possible: GCPI's Agenda for Economic Well-Being*** reflects our vision for a nation where people have the freedom and resources to care for themselves and their loved ones. In this future, economic opportunity is a right, hardship and instability are the exception, and children have what they need to reach their full potential. That is the American dream.

Imagining an America where opportunity is available to everyone requires directly addressing systems that hold back women of color. Prioritizing women of color isn't just a slogan—it's sound strategy. Centering women of color generates a ripple effect, benefiting all families and creating systems that work for everyone.

Our work ensures that policy agendas and policymaker actions are informed by the lived experiences of people experiencing poverty. Together, we're building a future free from poverty, grounded in opportunity for all.



## Our History: Bridging Research & Policy

More than half a century ago, civil rights and anti-poverty leaders envisioned a country that lived up to its ideals of opportunity, democracy, and a fair chance for every person.

Among these visionaries was Peter Edelman—Faculty Director and Founder of the Georgetown Center on Poverty and Inequality. Alongside Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Peter fought to establish some of the nation’s most successful anti-poverty programs. And after serving in all three branches of government, he took a principled stand to [push back against racist changes to welfare](#). Two decades later, he founded GCPI, envisioning an organization that could bridge the worlds of research and policy and harness the unique strengths of Georgetown University to power the next generation of poverty-fighting policy priorities.

### Over the past 10 years, GCPI has created opportunities to transform policy ideas into real change, including:

- Expanding pandemic unemployment assistance,
- Increasing flexibility for kinship care in foster systems,
- Improving wages and working conditions for direct care workers,
- Creating the monthly payment structure of the expanded Child Tax Credit,
- Advancing progressive paid leave policies,
- Expanding college financial aid for people in prison, and
- Distributing emergency funding to child care providers.



### ECONOMIC JUSTICE



## Prioritizing Women of Color Creates Ripples

In 2024, GCPI [welcomed a new Executive Director](#), Lelaine Bigelow, a changemaker and advocate for racial, gender, and economic justice. With deep expertise in the women’s movement and strong relationships with policymakers, Lelaine is leading GCPI toward a future where those most impacted by inequitable policies—especially women of color—are at the center of anti-poverty solutions.

Women of color are the economic anchors of their families and communities. But they are the most economically harmed and excluded by targeted government and private wealth-stripping in the U.S.. A thriving economy requires investing in policies that improve well-being. That's why our work focuses on:

- **Public Benefits:** Building the case for whole-family, community-centered approaches to food assistance, cash support, and social services.
- **Good Jobs:** Promoting job quality and job creation policies that ensure well-paying, secure jobs with fair benefits and build worker power.
- **Income & Cash Supports:** Championing policies such as a living wage, direct cash assistance, and progressive tax credits to provide economic stability.
- **Housing:** Ensuring safe, stable housing as a fundamental right for individuals and communities.
- **Care:** designing policies that recognize and fairly compensate caregiving labor, including paid leave.

## An Economic Well-Being Research Agenda

Economic inequality is growing, and too many families are left struggling because of policy choices that ignore their needs.

GCPI is committed to the long-term fight for an America without poverty. We are ready to defend what matters, deliver real solutions, and build the case for policies that help families thrive. GCPI is leveraging its deep policy expertise to partner with movement leaders and policymakers in pursuit of bold change. Our goals include:



- **Protecting and defending income supports** and public benefits programs, like SNAP, WIC, TANF, and guaranteed income programs.
- **Charting a new economic security index** to track economic well-being and guide future policymaking.
- **Building the evidence for a federal job guarantee** and expanding subsidized employment programs.
- **Strengthening digital benefits infrastructure** to modernize public benefits administration.
- **Supporting the care economy movement**, including by providing research and technical assistance, and elevating lived experience.
- Investing in **housing as a social good** including solutions that secure stable, affordable housing for all families.