



**POVERTY SOLUTIONS**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**FIVE YEARS OF  
IMPACT**

WELCOME TO THE POVERTY SOLUTIONS FIVE YEARS OF IMPACT REPORT.

Fall of 2021 marked the five-year anniversary of the launch of Poverty Solutions. Since then, we have undertaken hundreds of projects, established powerful community partnerships throughout the country, and demonstrated the myriad ways we can connect our research to policy and practice. In this five-year anniversary report, we offer a brief look at some of the people and projects that have helped advance our efforts to prevent and alleviate the devastating effects of poverty.

poverty.umich.edu | #UMPovertySolutions

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SINCE 2016

Supported the Publication of

**100**

ACADEMIC JOURNAL ARTICLES, WORKING PAPERS, & POLICY BRIEFS

Hosted

**105**

EVENTS

Exploring the Causes and Consequences of Poverty

With More Than

**1,500**

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

Connected With More Than

**15,000**

PEOPLE

in Our Efforts to Eliminate Poverty

Collaborated With More Than

**140**

FACULTY EXPERTS

in Efforts to Address Economic Disparities

Partnered With All

**19**

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

on Projects and Events

IN 2021

Cited

**500+**

TIMES IN NATIONAL & REGIONAL MEDIA

Generated

**1.7M+**

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPRESSIONS

Engaged More Than

**250**

STUDENTS

in Research Assistantships, Projects, and Courses



Poverty Solutions Director **H. Luke Shaefer**

**Poverty Solutions is a presidential initiative of the University of Michigan that partners with communities and policymakers to find new ways to prevent and alleviate poverty. In confronting the challenges of poverty, we know scholars do not have all the answers. Yet we have an important role to play. We can use data, evidence, and analysis to identify critical issues and evidence-based solutions to inform action.**

Since Poverty Solutions launched five years ago, we have built a program of research that is innovative, participatory, and action-oriented; we have provided teaching and research opportunities that prepare students for successful careers in the field; and we have built deep and long-lasting community partnerships that drive our agenda. This focus on rigorous research for change, conducted in partnership, distinguishes Poverty Solutions from other university-based poverty centers.

What we care most about is not ideology or theory, but whether our work fosters change that empowers families. Our record on this is what I am most proud of.

Our report on the impact of Michigan’s highest-in-the-nation auto insurance rates on economic mobility was highlighted by both Democratic Governor Gretchen Whitmer and the libertarian Mackinac Center for Public Policy in the leadup to the state’s 2019 auto insurance reform law. We recently released a follow-up evaluation report on the reform.

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators led by Lisa Murkowski and Joe Manchin highlighted another one of our reports as motivation for an additional \$800 million to help public school students who experienced homelessness during the pandemic.

Partnering with the State of Michigan, we helped design a \$50 million eviction prevention program that operated during fall 2020. Scholars at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning found it cut eviction filing rates to a small fraction of what they were in 2019.

Poverty Solutions supported my research that the New York Times and Time Magazine both noted was a key driver in the expansion of the Child Tax Credit in 2021. Scholars estimate that this policy change lifted millions of children out of poverty.

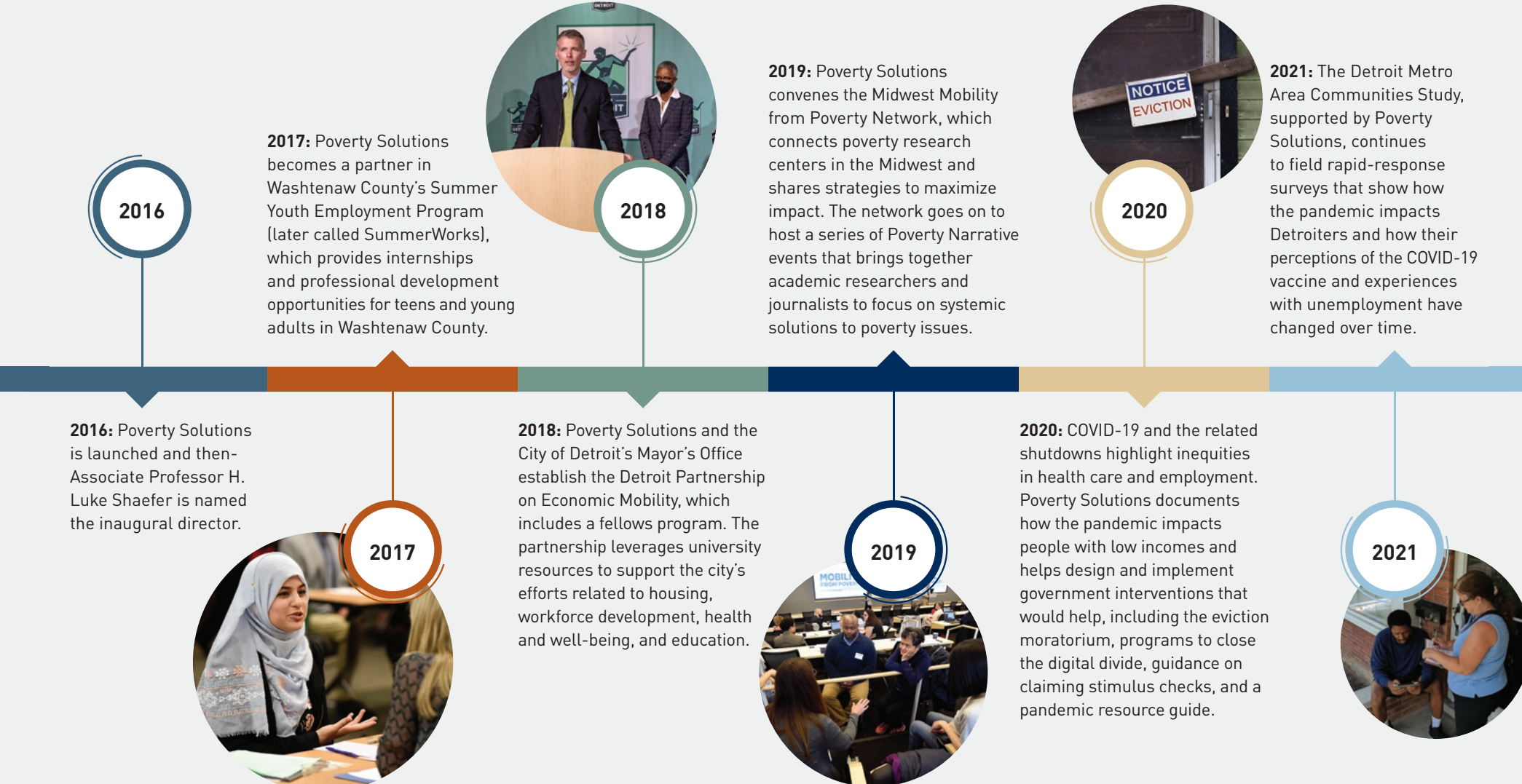
Our team also recognizes that structural racism plays an important role in the systems that create and perpetuate poverty. In turn, our efforts to address poverty must also commit to addressing racism. In 2021, we partnered with the U-M Center for Social Solutions to create the Confronting and Combating Racism Faculty Grant Program, which awarded grants to six action-based research projects. We have supported the Crafting Democratic Futures project conducted by the Center for Social Solutions that is working with communities to develop local reparations plans. We supported the launch of the Center for Racial Justice at the Ford School of Public Policy, a cross-disciplinary hub that aims to foster deep relationships between research and advocacy for a more equitable and just society. And we have supported student efforts to enhance understanding of structural racism and how to address it.

Since Poverty Solutions was launched in 2016, we have sought to make good on the investment by the University of Michigan in this initiative. I am so grateful to be at a public university that would make such a commitment to using our community’s knowledge and skills to address poverty. I believe that through that commitment, the University of Michigan has been a part of impacting the lives of millions of people for the better, and it is my hope to extend that impact for years to come.

Sincerely,  
**H. Luke Shaefer**  
Director, Poverty Solutions | Hermann and Amalie Kohn Professor of Social Justice and Social Policy

# OUR HISTORY

In the past five years, Poverty Solutions has undertaken hundreds of research projects with faculty and students across the university, established powerful community partnerships throughout the country, and demonstrated the meaningful impact of connecting research to policy and practice. This brief timeline offers a look at some of the signature projects that have helped advance our efforts to confront poverty and be a part of positive change.



# SECTION 1 FIVE YEARS OF IMPACT



LISTEN



ANALYZE



SHARE FINDINGS



IMPLEMENT



EVALUATE

## THE ARC OF SYSTEMS CHANGE

The following stories demonstrate how Poverty Solutions has worked with partners to inform concrete policy change in the areas of expanding the Child Tax Credit, increasing access to affordable housing, and improving systems to identify students experiencing homelessness. Our approach begins with **listening** to community input to set our research agenda, followed by **analyzing** data and conducting research to identify existing policy gaps, **sharing** those findings and proposing evidence-based interventions, **supporting the implementation** of new policies, then **evaluating** the outcome of those new policies, and sharing the findings.

## STRENGTHENING THE CASH SAFETY NET TO REDUCE POVERTY AND HARDSHIP

**In March 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act, which included an expansion of the Child Tax Credit that increased the amount of the credit, made it available to more families, and distributed it in monthly payments.**

Poverty Solutions Director H. Luke Shaefer and his colleagues contributed to this legislation through significant research demonstrating the poverty-reduction potential of the expanded tax credit, which mirrors the design of a near-universal child allowance used in other countries. This policy change is estimated to have already lifted millions of children out of poverty.



LISTEN

Shaefer's interest in this kind of policy emerged from his work with Princeton Professor Kathryn Edin on their 2015 book, "\$2 a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America." The book traces the policy decisions that contributed to a sharp rise in the number of families with children who endured periods with virtually no cash income, and it profiled several families living in this kind of extreme poverty. After listening to the stories of these families, Shaefer and Edin made the case for major policy reforms including strengthening the cash safety net. The New York Times and Time Magazine have credited the book with helping to change the narrative about child poverty in a way that opened the door for an expanded Child Tax Credit.



ANALYZE

A 2018 journal article authored by Shaefer, Edin, and eight colleagues laid out a vision for how the U.S. could transform the Child Tax Credit into a near-universal child allowance of up to \$300 per child per month. Informed by this research, the American Families Act was first introduced in the U.S. Senate in 2017, setting the table for the current expanded Child Tax Credit.

During the pandemic, federal policymakers used other kinds of cash transfers to reduce poverty and buffer families against hardship during a time of unprecedented job loss. These included Economic Impact Payments and expanded unemployment assistance.



Poverty Solutions Director H. Luke Shaefer

Poverty Solutions researchers found that material hardship and adverse mental health symptoms fell following cash transfers from the federal government and rose in the absence of government action.

"We can see in the data the ways in which these payments are impacting families across the country: helping them pay for food, bills, and other household expenses," said Patrick Cooney, assistant director of policy impact at Poverty Solutions. "But we can also see that there's more work to do to ensure all eligible families receive the help they need."

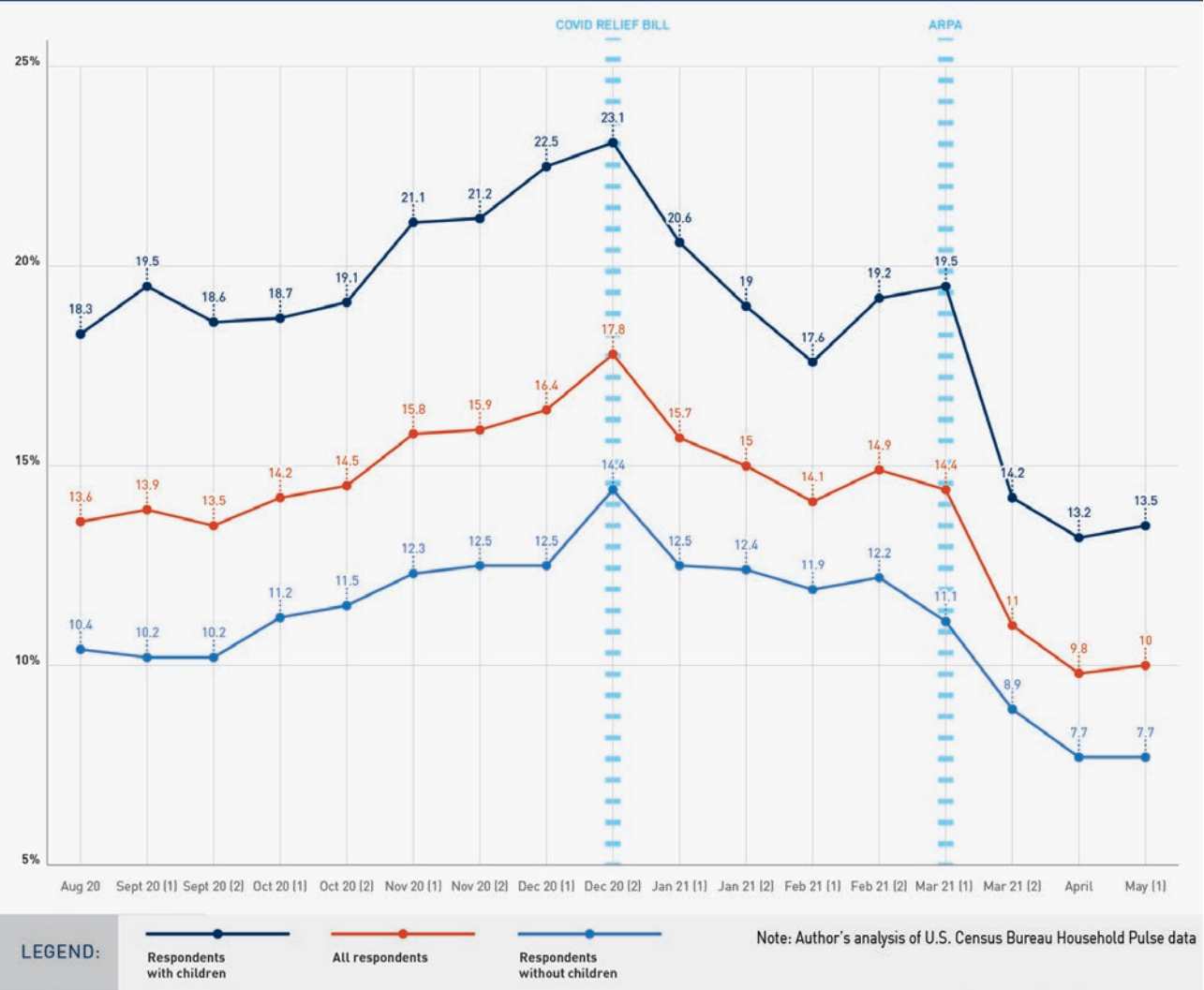


SHARE FINDINGS

The New York Times featured Poverty Solutions' analysis of material hardship levels over the course of the pandemic in a front page story, leading to stories in dozens of other news outlets, an appearance on PBS NewsHour, and a White House press release. In September 2021, Shaefer testified about the impact of pandemic cash transfer programs at a hearing before the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.

"The social safety net response ushered in by the bipartisan CARES Act and continued in the December COVID relief bill and American Rescue Plan is truly historic. A wealth of evidence now shows it has proven incredibly effective," Shaefer said during his testimony. "I believe the success is due in large part to the speed and flexibility of a broad-based approach that prioritized putting money in people's pockets." The major expansion of the child tax credit follows this approach.

VERY DIFFICULT TO PAY FOR USUAL HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES IN LAST SEVEN DAYS



IMPLEMENT

To realize the full poverty-reduction potential of the federal safety net cash transfers during the COVID-19 era, eligible families need to claim them. Poverty Solutions worked closely with a coalition of Detroit leaders and collaborated with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services to raise awareness of the expanded tax credit. In addition, in the spring of 2020, Poverty Solutions launched a website answering questions about Economic Impact Payments. By the summer of 2021, it had generated more than 658,000 visitors. A similar website on the Child Tax Credit generated well over 13,000 views.

Outreach efforts resulted in news coverage raising awareness of how to claim the credit from Spanish NPR podcast ¿Que Onda Michigan?, the American Public Human Services Association, MLive, Detroit News, Detroit Free Press, Michigan Radio, and Mid-Michigan Now, among others.



EVALUATE

Census Bureau research shows the expanded Child Tax Credit has already contributed to a decline in food hardship among families with children. Additionally, Poverty Solutions researchers partnered with Propel, which runs the Providers mobile app used by more than 5 million families receiving food assistance, to survey families with low incomes about their receipt and usage of the initial Child Tax Credit payments. The survey responses guided ongoing outreach efforts and received news coverage from CNN, WHYY Philadelphia, the Detroit Free Press, and other media outlets across the country.

However, the expanded Child Tax Credit expired at the end of 2021. Academic research will play a key role in informing decisions to extend the Child Tax Credit or make it permanent.

BUILDING A PATH TO SAFE AND STABLE HOUSING FOR ALL DETROITERS

**Detroit's housing crisis is multifaceted and complex. It has been shaped by an inadequate supply of affordable housing; high property tax rates often based on inflated property assessments; aging and deteriorating housing; a lack of home repair resources; and a pattern of bulk ownership that has exacerbated displacement pressures.**

Each of these factors contributes to an environment in which safe, stable, and affordable housing is out of reach for many residents with low incomes. As city officials and housing advocacy organizations work to address those challenges, research supported by Poverty Solutions provides crucial feedback on what's effective and what's not.



LISTEN

Over the past five years, researchers at Poverty Solutions have explored a number of features of Detroit's housing ecosystem that prevent many Detroiters—78% of whom are Black—from obtaining safe, stable, affordable

housing. First, predatory lending practices and the economic impact of the recession led to widespread mortgage and tax foreclosures. From 2005 to 2015, 120,000 residential properties in Detroit—nearly half of all such properties in the city—experienced at least one mortgage or tax foreclosure. During this time, Detroit shifted from a majority-owner to a majority-renter city. And while thousands of homeowners were eligible for Detroit's Homeowners Property Tax Assistance Program (HPTAP, now called HOPE), Poverty Solutions researchers found that just a fraction of those eligible applied for this exemption that could have prevented foreclosure.

The large number of foreclosures spurred greater instability in the city's housing market, as speculators bought foreclosed properties in bulk, generated profits, and in numerous cases evicted tenants. With banks largely unwilling to lend after the foreclosure crisis, many of these homes were also resold to Detroiters through predatory land contracts, which often carry high interest rates and little protection from eviction.

In addition, due to the city's aging housing stock, deferred maintenance from investor-landlords, and limited

enforcement of rental codes, homeowners and renters alike face significant home repair needs, threatening their health, safety, and long-term housing stability.

These factors combine to create significant barriers to Detroiters obtaining safe, stable, affordable housing. And it is these barriers that Poverty Solutions researchers have set out to tackle, in partnership with policymakers and community groups.



ANALYZE

To fully understand how these housing issues affected Detroiters, Poverty Solutions staff and faculty affiliates analyzed the housing needs of residents and the housing ecosystem in a variety of ways:

- Helped identify housing in Detroit at risk of losing affordability protections;
- Interviewed 105 homeowners with low incomes to understand the barriers they faced in accessing Detroit's HPTAP exemption;

- Analyzed patterns and consequences of bulk property ownership in Detroit by linking datasets on property transactions and ownership to subsequent eviction filings, childhood lead poisoning events, and demolitions;
- Interviewed dozens of community-based organizations to better understand the city’s home repair ecosystem;
- Analyzed overall home repair needs in Detroit;
- Partnered with the City of Detroit to place an Affordable Housing Policy Fellow, Karen Kling, in the Housing and Revitalization Department where she evaluated existing home repair programs in the city and reviewed leading home repair programs in other cities;
- Interviewed 39 participants in a local program that helps Detroit homeowners with low incomes pay for necessary home repairs, to understand the impact of small-scale, emergency repairs on housing stability;
- Reviewed existing research on land contracts and interviewed local and national experts on the dangers and potential benefits of land contracts;
- Met with community leaders and local residents to discuss the factors that led to both positive and negative experiences with land contracts.

SHARE FINDINGS

In 2017, Poverty Solutions faculty experts Margaret Dewar and Lan Deng helped compile information about Low Income Housing Tax Credit properties whose affordability restrictions were set to expire between 2016 and 2022 and map them by neighborhood. This resource has been critical to city staff as they make plans to preserve affordable housing in developing neighborhoods.

In December 2018, Poverty Solutions faculty expert Roshanak Mehdipanah and postdoctoral fellow Alexa Eisenberg published a report and policy brief sharing the findings of the HPTAP research. This research found that 70% of the homeowners interviewed had never applied for HPTAP, even though 92% would have qualified for the exemption. Importantly, the researchers also found the application process often prevented eligible homeowners from successfully receiving the tax exemption. These publications outlined several recommendations for how to improve HPTAP awareness, access, and accountability, and alleviate tax debt for eligible residents who hadn’t received the exemption in past years.

This was followed by a working paper by Poverty Solutions faculty expert Josh Akers (and co-author Eric Seymour) and subsequent policy brief in 2019 outlining how bulk property sales created an “eviction machine” that magnified housing instability in Detroit’s low-income housing market. According to this research, 90% of purchases from the Wayne County tax foreclosure auction went to investors and bulk buyers. These properties were the sites of multiple evictions, neglect, additional tax foreclosures, and eventual demolition at public cost. Researchers recommended a number of reforms, including significant modifications to the tax foreclosure auction; targeted attention to owners with an outsized number of evictions and demolitions; support for renters living in properties in significant disrepair; a retroactive property tax exemption for homeowners with low incomes; and guaranteed legal counsel for tenants with low incomes facing eviction.

In 2021, Poverty Solutions disseminated another policy brief on the risks and benefits of land contracts in Detroit. This brief both outlined how these contracts



Poverty Solutions team members meet with Detroit community experts.

could affect housing stability and proposed policy guardrails to maximize protections for Detroiters.

Also in 2021, Poverty Solutions shared a working paper, policy brief, and report on public attitudes that documented the magnitude of home repair needs in Detroit. The findings noted that around 90,000 Detroiters are living in housing with significant repair needs—most of which residents were not able to afford. They also found that for participants of United Community Housing Coalition’s Make It Home Repair Program, small-sum repair grants helped address many critical repair needs.

IMPLEMENT

Detroit City Council passed an ordinance in November 2018 that simplified the HPTAP application; Eisenberg worked with the Coalition to End Unconstitutional Tax Foreclosures (now the Coalition for Property Tax Justice) to help draft that ordinance and revise the city’s HPTAP application.

In March 2020, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer drew from the recommendations of a coalition of community leaders, including Poverty Solutions, to create a new “Pay as You Stay” program that reduced the burden of back property taxes for low-income Detroiters who qualify for HPTAP.

EVALUATE

In addition to using evidence to help inform and implement new programs, Poverty Solutions researchers also evaluate the impact of new programs and policies, building our collective knowledge about enhancing housing stability in Detroit.

Based on policy changes that were informed by Poverty Solutions research, there has been a significant increase in the number of Detroiters who applied for assistance through HPTAP. In 2019, 9,089 homeowners received tax exemptions through the program, which exceeds the 7,880 full and partial tax exemptions granted in 2018 and 5,836 exemptions in 2017.

And this work will only continue, as Poverty Solutions researchers seek to understand and improve upon programs and policies—around eviction prevention, land contracts, home repair, homeownership, code enforcement, and more—to build a more supportive housing ecosystem in Detroit. We will continue to listen, analyze the data, share our findings, work with policymakers and community groups to help design new programs and policies, and evaluate the impact of that work, in an effort to do our part to help all Detroit residents obtain safe, stable, and affordable housing.

In 2020, Poverty Solutions served on a working group with the governor’s office to establish a comprehensive \$50 million eviction diversion program that included emergency rental assistance funding, expanded eviction diversion programs statewide, and changed court procedures to enable tenants to connect with legal services and protect their rights. This program was informed by recommendations outlined in research supported by Poverty Solutions and led by faculty affiliates Robert Goodspeed and Dewar in partnership with housing attorneys. Their research provided the first comprehensive analysis of statewide eviction filing rates.

Currently, members of the Poverty Solutions team, in partnership with Enterprise Community Partners, are working with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority, Michigan Department of Insurance and Financial Services, and the City of Detroit’s Working Group on Consumer Financial Protection to provide research that will inform legislative guardrails that protect land contract buyers. In addition, Poverty Solutions is creating a Land Contract Buyer Guide to share with community members.

In September 2021, the City of Detroit announced a new \$30 million program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act, to help low-income senior citizens and homeowners with disabilities get major home repairs. This program was informed by Poverty Solutions’ work with the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study to survey Detroit residents on home repair needs as well as its evaluation of home repair resources in Detroit and analysis of the UCHC Make It Home Repair Program.

POVERTY SOLUTIONS  
OP-EDS & FEATURES  
ON HOUSING

**DETROIT NEWS:** Suspending the tax auction was long overdue. Let’s not bring it back.  
**Josh Akers**  
Read article at: [myumi.ch/M99A9](https://myumi.ch/M99A9)

**NEW YORK TIMES:** A progressive vision is possible if we spend money thoughtfully now.  
**Robert Gordon and Michele Jolin**  
Read article at: [myumi.ch/QeeWq](https://myumi.ch/QeeWq)

“Our collaboration with Poverty Solutions has been instrumental in building stakeholder consensus on land contract policies and has significantly improved the likelihood that the State will enact the recommended reforms. It is hard to convey how valuable I find my relationship with Poverty Solutions and its partners, but I can attest, they have my trust, and I look forward to collaborating on additional projects in the future.”



—Sam Buchalter,  
special assistant for  
program development,  
Michigan State  
Housing Development  
Authority

**BRIDGE DETROIT:** Here’s why many Detroiters want federal aid to go to home repair.  
Read article at: [myumi.ch/n88Ay](https://myumi.ch/n88Ay)

# ADDRESSING STUDENT HOMELESSNESS AMID THE PANDEMIC

**The COVID-19 pandemic made an already challenging task for school staff even more difficult: how to identify which students do not currently have a stable place to live and connect them with resources to ensure they're able to fully participate in school.**

Prior research by Poverty Solutions Senior Research Associate Jennifer Erb-Downward, who specializes in family homelessness, had already identified an undercount of students experiencing homelessness across Michigan, and especially in Detroit. During the pandemic, Erb-Downward's work brought new attention to this issue and motivated an \$800 million federal investment in services for students without stable housing.



## LISTEN

Since she started at Poverty Solutions in 2017, Erb-Downward has built relationships with homelessness working groups in Detroit and school homeless liaisons from across the state while looking for opportunities to connect service providers in different sectors around common goals related to addressing homelessness.

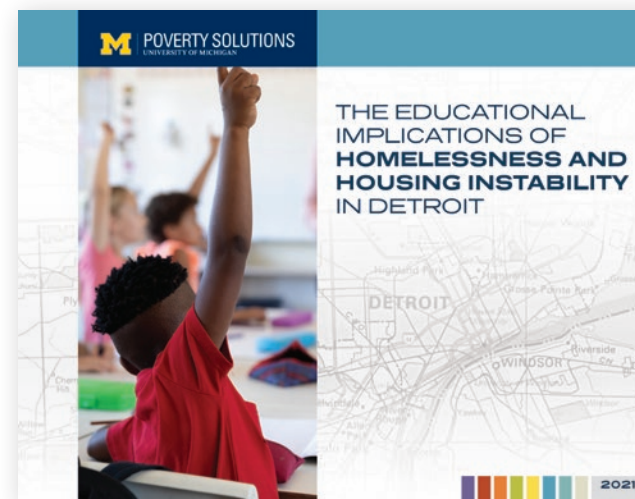
When schools abruptly closed in 2020 and shifted to virtual learning, Erb-Downward partnered with SchoolHouse Connection, a national nonprofit working to overcome homelessness through education, to listen to school staff about their efforts to reach students experiencing homelessness during the pandemic.



## ANALYZE

Their survey of school homeless liaisons across the country found schools were identifying an estimated 420,000 fewer students experiencing homelessness in school year 2020-21 than had been identified prior to the pandemic.

"Failing to identify when students experience homelessness deprives children of their legal rights to an equal education. Under-identification of homeless students also means educators and schools don't have essential information about the barriers that children and their families may face," Erb-Downward said.



Meanwhile, Erb-Downward continued work on a databook outlining the connections between homelessness in Michigan and chronic absenteeism, the number of midyear school transfers, graduation and dropout rates, school discipline rates, access to public assistance, and likelihood of entering the foster care system. The databook revealed homelessness has a lasting impact on educational outcomes for K-12 students, and up to 88% of Detroit children experiencing homelessness are not identified by their schools.



## SHARE FINDINGS

A bipartisan group of U.S. senators cited findings from the homeless liaison survey with SchoolHouse Connection in a letter to the U.S. Department of Education about implementing the \$800 million designated in the American Rescue Plan Act for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness.

Erb-Downward also discussed her research at a U.S. House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education hearing in May 2021 on strengthening connections with students experiencing homelessness and children in foster care.

The databook on student homelessness in Michigan, released in 2021 after conducting three years' worth of analyses, garnered media coverage from news outlets in Detroit and parts of rural northern Michigan with high rates of student homelessness. Poverty Solutions partnered with Chalkbeat Detroit to host a virtual panel discussion on the findings that brought together Detroit educators, service providers, and people with lived experience with housing instability to discuss how schools can better identify and support students experiencing homelessness.



## IMPLEMENT

Since Erb-Downward first identified an undercount of students experiencing homelessness in Detroit in 2018, the city's shelter system and school districts have implemented a referral system to make sure schools are aware when one of their students enters a shelter. Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) has also strengthened its systems of identification and support for students experiencing homelessness under the leadership of the Assistant Director for Homeless and Foster Care Services Michelle Parker. All DPSCD school buildings now have a homelessness point of contact to assist in identification and support of students experiencing housing instability, and Parker has developed partnerships with groups ranging from school Information Technology



Jennifer Erb-Downward

staff to city police to shelter and drop-in center supports.

Also, state lawmakers recently introduced a package of school discipline reform bills that would require schools to consider students' history of homelessness in discipline decisions—a recommendation informed by feedback on Erb-Downward's research findings from community advocates who work with families whose students are facing school discipline action.



## EVALUATE

In recent years, identification of students experiencing homelessness has increased by more than 200% at DPSCD. The district created a basic needs pantry to support students and their families and now asks all students in third through 12th grade whether they have experienced housing instability as part of a mental health screening. Erb-Downward recently mapped school discipline and homelessness data at the school district level to provide local stakeholders across the state with the information they need to consider school discipline reform that takes into account students' history of homelessness.

On a national scale, Erb-Downward's partnership with SchoolHouse Connection will turn to assessing current trends in identifying students experiencing homelessness as the pandemic continues. This work will inform policy recommendations and ongoing efforts by schools and service providers to evaluate what's working in addressing student homelessness and identify opportunities to improve available resources.

## SECTION 2

# AMPLIFYING IMPACT THROUGH ROBUST PARTNERSHIPS

### CROSS-CAMPUS PROJECTS

Poverty Solutions has engaged more than 650 students in research assistantships, projects, courses, and events representing all 19 schools and colleges. In addition, Poverty Solutions' faculty partnerships encapsulate the full range of expertise represented across U-M departments and campuses.

### SUPPORTING FACULTY RESEARCH WITH REAL-WORLD IMPACT

Supporting faculty research that explores and develops strategies to address poverty from a broad range of disciplinary perspectives is a central tenet of Poverty Solutions' mission. We prioritize action-based research that focuses on effective, real-world solutions. This past year we launched a Confronting and Combating Racism Faculty Grant Program in partnership with U-M's Center for Social Solutions to support research addressing challenges such as systemic oppression, organizational exclusion, institutional discrimination, neglectful policy, and violence against the minds, bodies, and cultures of people of color.



#### DETROIT RIVER STORY LAB

David Porter, a professor in U-M's English Department, partnered with regional leaders to develop a three-pronged approach to amplifying the history and ongoing importance of the Detroit River from an anti-racist perspective. The first part entailed co-creating a curriculum for middle and high school students on the history and enduring effects of the Detroit River's role in the Underground Railroad from an angle that emphasized Black Americans' history of resilience, agency, and liberation. The second component of this project entailed a partnership with Bridge Detroit to promote public discussion of the place of Black history in recent efforts to redevelop the waterfront and claim it as a site of cultural heritage. Finally, Porter used this grant to advance an ongoing bid to secure a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) World Heritage Site designation for the Detroit River. This included a congressional resolution, introduced by U.S. Representatives Rashida Tlaib and Brenda Lawrence, celebrating the 20th anniversary of the International Underground Railroad Memorial Monument, calling for the addition of the Detroit River to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list, and the creation of an International Gateway to Freedom National Heritage Corridor.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

"Poverty Solutions facilitated many conversations with different stakeholders and helped disseminate our findings. As a junior faculty, I am really grateful for the opportunities Poverty Solutions has given me to establish myself as a researcher in this field."

— Roshanak Mehdipanah, assistant professor, public health



#### BEYOND RHETORIC: CONFRONTING AND COMBATING RACISM IN GENESEE COUNTY, MICHIGAN

On June 10, 2020, the Genesee County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution declaring racism a public health crisis. Lisa M. Lapeyrouse, associate professor in UM-Flint's Department of Public Health and Health Sciences, aims to ensure this resolution has a meaningful impact on the health and well-being of residents of color, extending beyond mere rhetoric. To accomplish that, Lapeyrouse is leading efforts to develop a decision-making Community Action Council that is responsible for developing an evidence-based strategic plan to eliminate racist policies and practices impacting the health and well-being of Genesee County residents of color. She is also cultivating opportunities for public input on the strategic plan at virtual town hall meetings, and reaching out to key stakeholders for their insights. Finally, Lapeyrouse is developing a website of resources for anti-racist policies and practices to assist other local, state, and national organizations to assess their current policies and practices, and adopt anti-racist policies and practices that impact the health and well-being of people of color.

"If you're not looking at racism as a systemic problem, then it becomes a lot easier to ignore." — Lisa M. Lapeyrouse

SPEAKER SERIES AND OTHER CAMPUS EVENTS

Over the past five years, Poverty Solutions and partners across campus hosted more than 100 events and talks, including the annual **Real-World Perspectives on Poverty Solutions Speaker Series** that featured experts in policy and practice from across the nation. Some of the noteworthy speakers included:

2018  
**Robert Vargas**, assistant professor of sociology, University of Chicago

2019  
**Faith Fowler**, pastor of Cass Community United Methodist Church and the executive director of Cass Community Social Services

**Dorian Warren**, president of Community Change

2020  
**Michael Arceneaux**, New York Times best-selling author

**Lori Lightfoot**, mayor of Chicago  
**Joneigh Khaldun**, former chief medical executive and chief deputy director for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

**Garlin Gilchrist II**, lieutenant governor of Michigan

**Nicholas Kristof**, New York Times columnist and author

2021  
**Eric Garcetti**, mayor of Los Angeles



Robert Vargas



Faith Fowler



Dorian Warren



Michael Arceneaux



Lori Lightfoot



Joneigh Khaldun



Garlin Gilchrist II



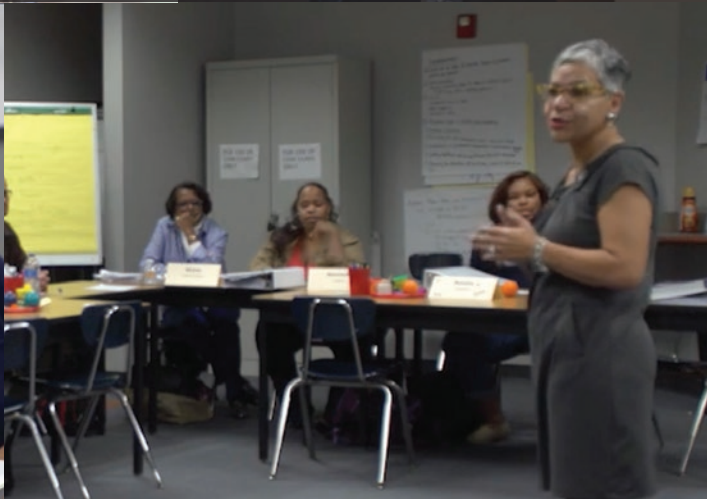
Nicholas Kristof



Eric Garcetti



DETROIT OUTREACH



COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

ENGAGING STUDENTS TO FIND NEW POVERTY SOLUTIONS

Since its inception, Poverty Solutions has sought to equip the next generation of leaders with the skills they need to prevent and alleviate poverty. This has included offering courses that help students unpack the factors that lead to and exacerbate poverty as well as analyze proposed remedies. In addition, Poverty Solutions provides students with experiential learning opportunities in which they can support community partners or assist faculty developing research that impacts real-time policy challenges.



**KATLIN BRANTLEY**, of Oxford, Michigan, connected with Poverty Solutions as an undergraduate student in 2019 through the Sociology Opportunities for Undergraduate Leadership program for first-generation college students. They have continued their work as a research assistant with Poverty Solutions while pursuing their Master’s of Social Work, contributing to the Understanding Communities of Deep Disadvantage research, Detroit Metro Area Communities Study, Prosecutor Transparency Project, and various projects for the Detroit Partnership on Economic Mobility. They also completed the Real-World Perspectives on Poverty Solutions course.

“My involvement with Poverty Solutions has allowed me to develop a more robust understanding of poverty and the various failed systems involved. Additionally, I have gained valuable skills related to academic writing, data analysis, interview facilitation, and stakeholder engagement, among others. This experience will undoubtedly shape my future practice as a social worker, particularly in how I engage with clients, communities, and systems.” — **Katlin Brantley**



**CHRISTOPHER LEFLORE**, a Detroit native, was a graduate student research assistant with Poverty Solutions while earning his Master’s of Urban Planning and Public Policy at U-M. He graduated in May 2021 and now works as special assistant to the president of the Kresge Foundation. LeFlore is a cofounder of BankBlackUSA, a grassroots nonprofit that works to promote financial inclusion and wealth building through research and advocacy. LeFlore worked with Poverty Solutions to manage a team of students who developed a data dashboard and interactive map for BankBlackUSA that makes it easier for people to identify Black-owned financial institutions across the country, review their financial products, and compare their lending practices to large banks. Poverty Solutions also supported LeFlore’s work with the City of Detroit developing the Detroit Department of Transportation COVID-19 Safe Workplace Plan and new land use policies in partnership with the Detroit Land Bank.

“Poverty Solutions is an invaluable resource at the University of Michigan that empowered my work for the communities I care about, pushing it to greater heights. There are not enough entities like Poverty Solutions that can provide the resources, acumen, and passion to create change.” — **Christopher LeFlore**

POVERTY SOLUTIONS CROSS-CAMPUS COLLABORATIONS

	FACULTY	STUDENTS	EVENTS	SUMMERWORKS
Architecture & Urban Planning	26 (8)	21	8	3
Art & Design	6 (3)	8	2	3
Business	12 (7)	32	5	6
Dentistry	–	–	–	2
Education	13 (7)	13	5	–
Engineering	6 (3)	13	3	3
Environment & Sustainability	10 (3)	9	4	–
Information	15 (3)	38	–	3
Kinesiology	1 (1)	7	–	3
Law	10 (4)	7	5	–
Literature, Science, and the Arts	47 (19)	198	10	26
Medicine	31 (11)	–	6	29
Music, Theater & Dance	1 (1)	3	–	1
Nursing	7 (2)	8	1	–
Pharmacy	–	1	1	1
Public Health	46 (17)	43	5	6
Public Policy	51 (16)	110	26	5
Social Work	59 (17)	65	13	4
U-M Libraries	–	–	–	13
U-M Administration	–	–	–	30
UM-Dearborn	18 (12)	–	2	–
UM-Flint	4 (3)	–	1	1
Institute for Social Research	18 (8)	–	5	10
Center for Health and Research Transformation	2 (1)	–	1	–
Information and Technology Services	–	–	–	4
Operations	–	–	–	31
Other Units	–	–	11	47



**Faculty partnerships** include expert network members, pilot research grants, academic publications, working papers, policy briefs, and externally funded projects. The number of individual faculty partners are included in parentheses.

**Student collaborations** include undergraduate and graduate student research assistants, doctoral students, postdocs, certificate enrollees, course enrollees, and student competition award winners.

**SummerWorks** include internship placements and professional mentors.

## WASHTENAW COUNTY INITIATIVES

The University of Michigan's Ann Arbor campus is located in Washtenaw County, one of the most economically segregated metropolitan areas in the country. Recognizing the university's impact on the local community, Poverty Solutions pursues partnerships with a variety of government officials, service providers, criminal justice administrators, educators, business leaders, and community advocates in Washtenaw County to promote equity and reduce poverty.

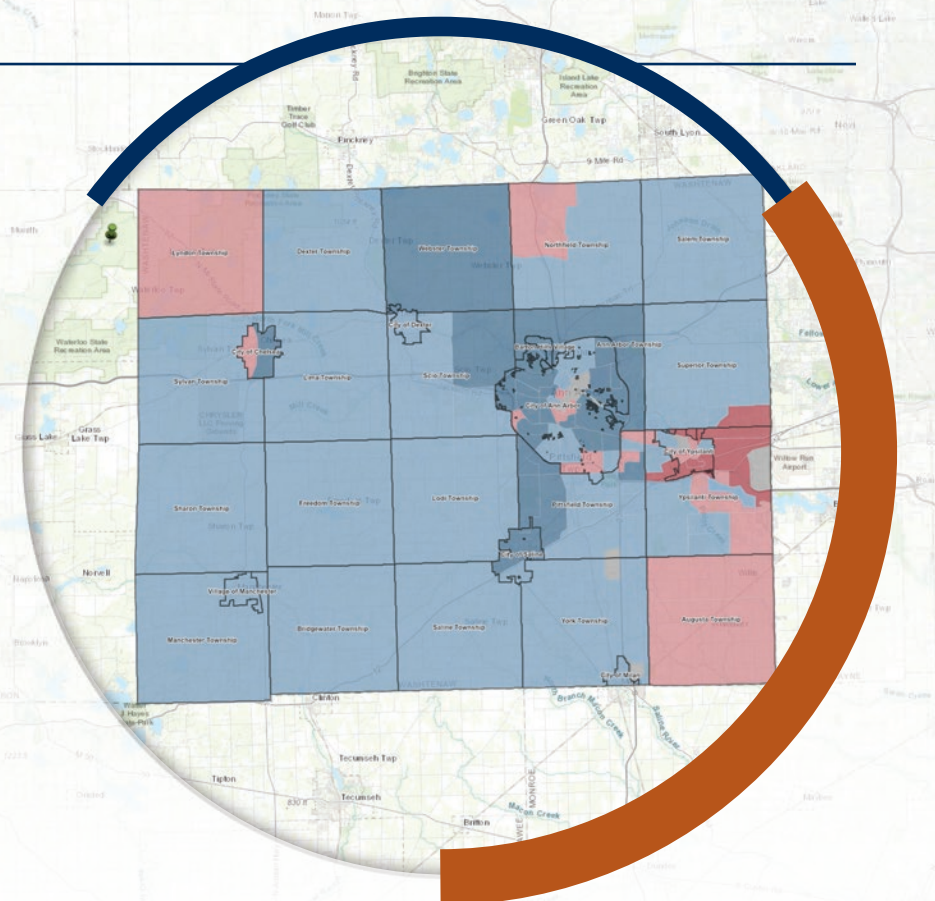
### PROSECUTOR TRANSPARENCY PROJECT

Poverty Solutions joined American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan and U-M Law School in backing a Prosecutor Transparency Project launched in January 2021 by Washtenaw County Prosecutor Eli Savit. The aim of the project—which includes Washtenaw, Oakland, and Ingham counties—is to uncover potential racial inequities through the collection and analysis of data on decisions made by the prosecutor's office, including who is charged with a crime, the nature of the charge, the race of the individual charged, and other crucial information such as plea-bargaining conduct. The results will be shared publicly through a data dashboard designed by Poverty Solutions.

"For the university to be an ethical partner in the community we have to think about the ways we can participate in work that extends benefits to communities," said Trevor Bechtel, student engagement and strategic projects manager for Poverty Solutions. "I recognize the power and privilege of the university and think about how I can extend the resources of the university in a sustainable way."

**"We know systemic racism exists in all facets of society, and the prosecutor's office is no exception. This partnership will go a long way toward helping inform how we make decisions and ensuring that justice is dispensed in an unbiased manner moving forward."**

— **Eli Savit**, Washtenaw County Prosecutor



Map of the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index. Darker blue areas indicate higher access to opportunity and darker red areas indicate lower access to opportunity.

### WASHTENAW COUNTY OPPORTUNITY INDEX

In 2018, Poverty Solutions partnered with Washtenaw County's Office for Community and Economic Development to refresh the county's Opportunity Index, which was originally created in 2015 to map a variety of metrics related to health, job access, economic well-being, education and training, and community engagement and stability by census tract. Working closely with county officials, Poverty Solutions provided technical assistance with revising the metrics included in the index, revamping the index methodology, data analysis, and developing a narrative to help users make sense of the disparities revealed by the Opportunity Index. The Office for Community and Economic Development unveiled the new Opportunity Index in April 2021 ([opportunitywashtenaw.org](http://opportunitywashtenaw.org)), and Washtenaw County Commissioners

## SUMMERWORKS

Since Poverty Solutions partnered with Washtenaw County's summer youth employment program in 2017, SummerWorks has placed young adults in 433 summer internships and engaged over 150 mentors in programs that offer youth a variety of professional development opportunities. When the pandemic limited in-person job placements, SummerWorks pivoted to offer virtual internships and mentoring. The mentorship and internship opportunities continued in 2021 in partnership with MichiganWorks! Southeast, Washtenaw County's Office for Community and Economic Development, Michigan Rehabilitation Services, and others.

In addition to evaluating the county's summer youth employment program, U-M provided nearly half of all of the summer internships offered. U-M also welcomed program participants to campus for weekly professional development sessions and speaker events. The SummerWorks program will continue in the summer of 2022 and we look forward to identifying even more opportunities for youth throughout the departments and centers on campus and across the broader community.

Learn more about the SummerWorks program at [summerworks.info](http://summerworks.info).



**"Standards of professionalism are oftentimes rooted in White supremacy. Young adults who live in disenfranchised communities are not always taught these unspoken rules. As the pandemic changes workforce development, SummerWorks provides local employment opportunities, comprehensive mentorship, and tools for success that our participants may not have access to otherwise."**

— **Zoë Erb**, Poverty Solutions' SummerWorks manager

**"SummerWorks has allowed me to become the person that I want to be and have the opportunity to grow."**

— **Asma Gundy**, 2019 and 2021 SummerWorks participant



passed a resolution committing to use the Opportunity Index to promote equity when deciding how to allocate resources across the county.

"My goal as an elected official is to make Washtenaw County a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive and be successful," said Washtenaw County Commissioner Justin Hodge. "I envision us being a county where race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and ZIP code do not determine a person's destiny, and I firmly believe that the Opportunity Index is a tool that will help make that a reality. Since formally making it part of our decision-making processes, I am already seeing the county be much more thoughtful about how we target resources and programming to address structural inequities. I am grateful for Poverty Solutions' work and am excited to continue working together!"

**"We value making data easily accessible and putting it in context. We know it can help us start to ask the right questions and have the right conversations about systems and policies. We hope the Opportunity Index will inform this work and help lead us toward solutions for making the changes we want to see."**



— **Natalie Peterson**, Poverty Solutions data and evaluation manager who spearheaded the Opportunity Index project

# DETROIT PARTNERSHIPS

Poverty Solutions continues to work closely with city officials, service providers, faculty researchers, nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups, and resident leaders in Detroit on a variety of projects aimed at poverty prevention and alleviation. Highlights from the Detroit Partnership on Economic Mobility, a collaboration between Poverty Solutions and the Detroit mayor’s office launched in 2018, include:

- outreach campaigns to ensure Detroit residents received stimulus checks and the expanded Child Tax Credit during the pandemic,
- advising on evidence-based interventions to improve access to affordable, quality housing in the city,
- assessment of labor market factors and barriers to employment, and
- six economic mobility fellowships to support city staff on issues like homelessness response, digital inclusion, and spending American Rescue Plan Act funds.



## AMPLIFYING DETROITERS’ VOICES

Listening to community partners is a priority in all of Poverty Solutions’ work. Consistent with this priority, Poverty Solutions works with the **Detroit Metro Area Communities Study (DMACS)**, a panel study that draws upon state-of-the-art scientific methods to provide the most representative insights available on issues that matter to Detroit residents. Over the course of the past five years, DMACS has administered 14 surveys and disseminated over 20 reports outlining Detroiters’ views on crime and policing, COVID-19 vaccines, the impact of recent investments in the city, transportation and mobility, housing, and more.

DMACS researchers partner with city government, philanthropy, nonprofits, and community-based organizations to co-develop survey questions. Partners also help share the analysis so it gets into the hands of policy decision-makers. Importantly, DMACS often repeats questions among their sample of respondents to see how attitudes toward different issues evolve over time.

“An essential ingredient to developing good policy is understanding what people want and need and how they experience their lives. At a really basic level, this is the government’s job. A lot of people don’t have an opportunity to articulate their needs, and they deserve to be represented in the policies that get made.”

—Elisabeth Gerber, professor of public policy and co-principal investigator of DMACS



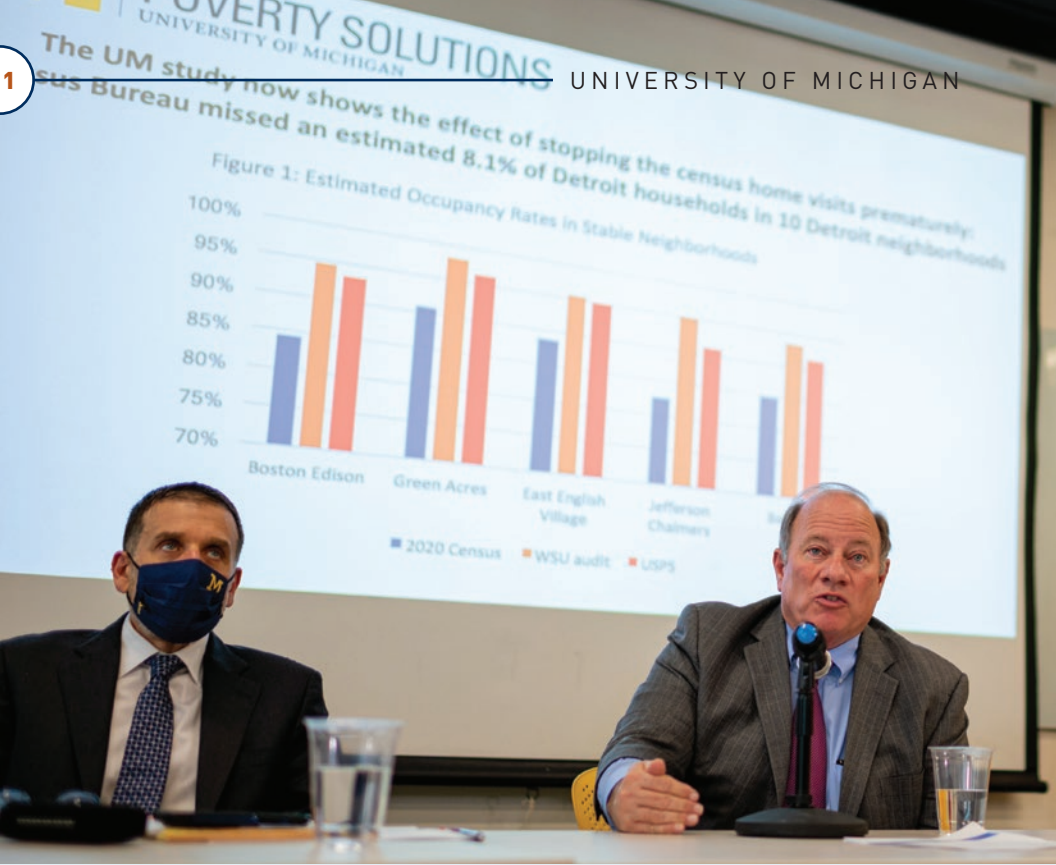
## DETROITERS’ PRIORITIES FOR ECONOMIC MOBILITY

In September 2020, Poverty Solutions published “Investing in Us: Resident Priorities for Economic Mobility,” which lifted up more than a decade’s worth of input from Detroit residents on how to increase economic mobility and decrease poverty in their city. The report was the culmination of a one-year, community-based research project that included focus groups with residents and the review of nearly 400 sources of information on how Detroiters view the connections between economic mobility and housing, education, work opportunities, environmental conditions, transportation, and other issues. The research aims to provide policymakers, philanthropic organizations, nonprofits, and other service providers with clear guidance on how Detroiters define economic well-being and what strategies they think will work best to increase economic mobility. In 2021, Poverty Solutions partnered with four Detroit organizations to provide funding and technical assistance to support and evaluate projects that implement recommendations from “Investing in Us.”

“The research world produces a lot of data, indicators, metrics, and maps to tell us how people are doing and how public policy might respond to the need. Often missing from this picture are the voices of residents themselves. Our goal with this project was to listen to residents, and make the voices of Detroiters our primary source of data,” said Afton Branche-Wilson, assistant director of community initiatives at Poverty Solutions and lead researcher for “Investing in Us.”

“When we need thought partners in the work and friends in the fight and boots on the ground, we think of Poverty Solutions.”

—Nicole Sherard-Freeman, City of Detroit group executive for jobs, economy, and Detroit at Work



## BY THE NUMBERS

SINCE 2016

45  
PROJECTS  
WITH THE  
CITY OF DETROIT



62  
COMMUNITY  
ORGANIZATION  
PARTNERS



6  
ECONOMIC  
MOBILITY  
FELLOWS



## STATE COLLABORATIONS

### EMPLOYMENT AND RISK FOR UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

Undocumented workers play critical roles in our economy and society. However, they often do so at significant risk to themselves and their families. These workers tend to work in the most dangerous sectors of employment. Within these industries, unauthorized immigrant workers are often assigned the hardest jobs with the highest risk. Consequently, unauthorized immigrants have significantly higher rates of workplace injury, workplace fatalities, and work-related health problems than U.S.-born workers. Yet immigrant workers are much less likely to receive workers' compensation when they are injured at work.

In a brief prepared for the Michigan Immigrant Rights Council (MIRC), Poverty Solutions Senior Data and Evaluation Manager Amanda Nothaft outlined just how costly these jobs can be for these families. Drawing on analyses from multiple large datasets, Nothaft finds that about 1,400 undocumented workers in Michigan are injured at work each year. Among those, about 440 are injured to a degree that requires them to miss work. Yet despite their contributions to Michigan' social and economic fabric, undocumented workers in Michigan lose close to \$3 million, or an estimated \$6,620 per worker, due to lost wages that result from a workplace injury and a lack of access to workers' compensation benefits. Nothaft continues to provide MIRC and other partners across the state with rigorous empirical analyses that illuminate the deeply consequential, yet often overlooked, experiences with economic vulnerability taking place throughout Michigan each day.

“Beyond being aware of an issue, quantifying the scope of it is the first step in understanding and addressing unmet needs. Working with partners to elucidate and measure an issue provides insight on the real, potential impacts of policy change.”



—Amanda Nothaft, senior data and evaluation manager, Poverty Solutions

## ENHANCING ACCESS TO STATE SUPPORT

Through its partnership with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), Luke Shaefer and the Poverty Solutions team have contributed to numerous evidence-based policy changes, including the expansion of food assistance to community college students, the simplification of asset limit tests for public assistance programs, streamlining the application process for energy assistance, and the design of a \$50 million eviction prevention program that U-M research finds cut evictions to a tiny fraction of what they were pre-pandemic.

One particularly novel policy change was a direct assistance collaboration with the state's largest energy providers. Spurred by fears about a wave of utility shut-offs during the summer of 2020, Shaefer and the Poverty Solutions team worked with MDHHS, the major energy providers, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's office, and the Michigan Public Service Commission to reduce the likelihood of this concern being realized. To do so, the major utilities sent MDHHS a confidential file of families facing shut-off of their utilities. The government agency was able to identify 41,000 households already receiving other public benefits, and use a process called “categorical eligibility” to make a direct payment on these accounts. Families did not have to take any steps to apply for aid.

Working on behalf of MDHHS, Shaefer asked the utilities to be a partner in this effort by forgiving 25% of all arrearages paid by the state, which they agreed to do. This had the effect of saving tens of thousands of Michigan families from utility shut-off during the first summer of the pandemic and also sharply reducing the flow of families seeking traditional forms of energy assistance from MDHHS, thus cutting administrative burden. The utilities forgave over \$5 million in arrears as a part of the program. Building on this success, MDHHS is currently working on a second, even larger round using funds from the American Rescue Plan.

### ADDRESSING CHILD POVERTY IN EMMET COUNTY

In 2019, a private donor from Emmet County reached out to Poverty Solutions to investigate the possibility of improving the well-being of people in his community who faced significant challenges related to poverty. In 2020, Poverty Solutions accepted the invitation to start a conversation with community leaders and residents in the Charlevoix-Emmet County area in the northwest tip of Michigan's Lower Peninsula.

Through conversations with stakeholders, researchers identified three intersecting issues—a “triangle of trouble”—that many

families experience: a lack of affordable child care, unstable housing, and unreliable transportation, with the most urgent issue being the need for child care. With a generous investment from private donors, Poverty Solutions will spend the next two years working alongside a local child care advisory group convened by North Central Michigan Community College to create a comprehensive plan to address the local shortage of affordable and high-quality child care. The goal is to pilot at least one new program proposed through that plan, with Poverty Solutions providing research and evaluation support. This project also includes a communications campaign to ensure eligible Emmet County families claim the expanded Child Tax Credit and know how to access the state's child care subsidy.

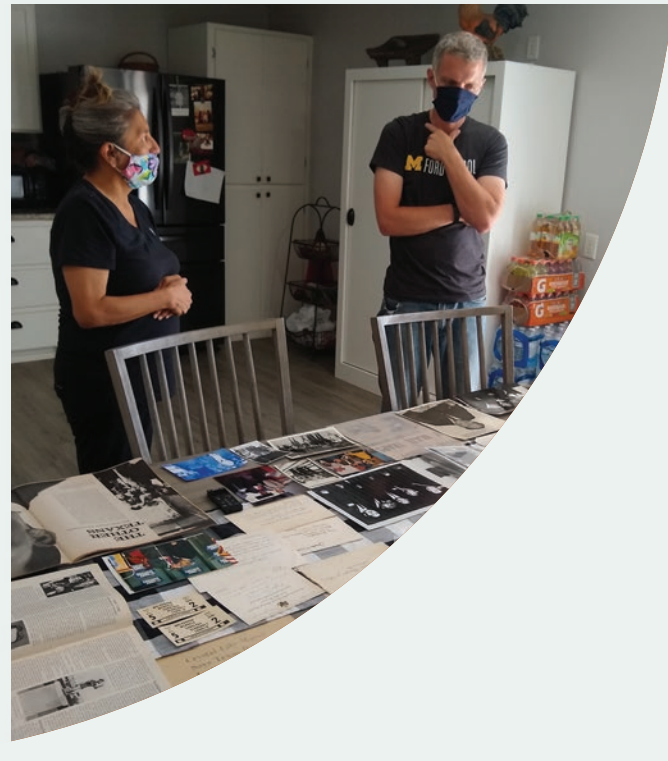


“I was honored that they invited Poverty Solutions to bring its skills to bear to further their efforts to increase access to affordable, quality child care in their community. I'm looking forward to working with them to bring their ideas to action this year!”

—Karen Kling, senior strategic projects manager at Poverty Solutions



GSRA Maricruz Moya and Poverty Solutions Director Luke Shaefer conducting field research in rural southern Texas.

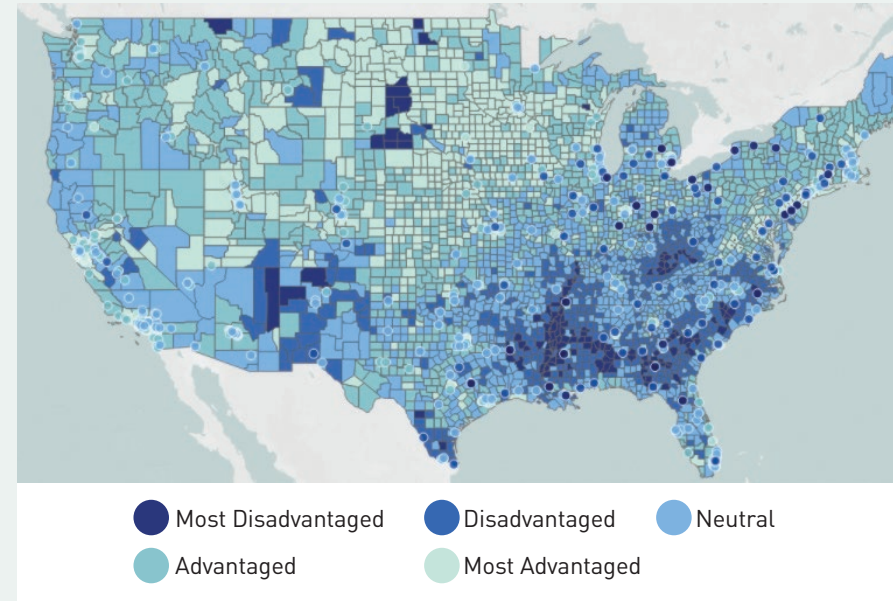


## NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

### UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES OF DEEP DISADVANTAGE

In 2018, Poverty Solutions, in partnership with Princeton University, began a project supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to identify America's most disadvantaged communities and better understand the mechanisms driving the struggles community members face. Researchers identified these communities by creating an Index of Deep Disadvantage that combines income, health, and economic mobility data. The index revealed that the vast majority of the top 100 most disadvantaged communities are rural areas with histories of racial and ethnic exploitation, many of which are in the South. Academic work on poverty traditionally focuses on cities, and this finding pushed Poverty Solutions to think about the ways the lack of research further disadvantages rural areas and identify strategies that can support low-income rural communities.

To supplement the data with on-the-ground perspectives, graduate student research assistants spent time in Marion County, South Carolina, and Clay County, Kentucky, in 2019 as well as Brooks and Zavala counties, Texas, and Leflore County, Mississippi, in 2021. The graduate students sharpened their research skills and gained insights into the unique challenges and opportunities facing each community.



The project has already resulted in a series of “Stories from the Field” authored by the graduate students, media coverage of the Index of Deep Disadvantage by regional news outlets in the communities highlighted by the research, and a blogpost and op-ed on how the lack of social infrastructure in disadvantaged rural areas contributes to opioid use. Poverty Solutions Director Luke Shaefer and Princeton’s Kathryn Edin and Tim Nelson will elaborate on the findings in a forthcoming book that examines the historical and structural factors driving deep disadvantage in certain regions and the interventions that would help those communities thrive.



“This project is vital because each story offers an authentic perspective on how policies directly impact people’s lives. Rural communities have unique barriers that require unique solutions, and I believe the findings will be instrumental for policymakers and advocates advancing change.”

—Maricruz Moya, Poverty Solutions Graduate Student Research Assistant

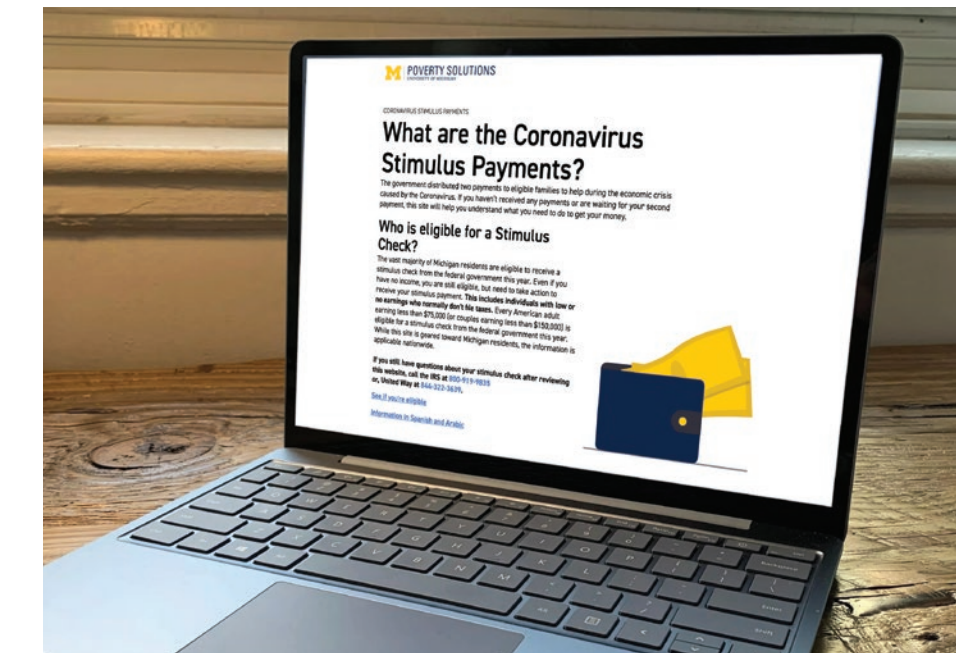
### PROMOTING ACCESS TO COVID-19 STIMULUS PAYMENTS

For most people, the stimulus checks provided by the federal government at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic were deposited directly into the bank account they listed on their most recent tax returns or delivered via the Social Security system. But people who didn’t file taxes, didn’t have a bank account, or didn’t have a stable address where the check could be mailed faced barriers to receiving their stimulus checks.

The 2020 Coronavirus Stimulus Payment website—developed by Poverty Solutions in partnership with Detroit-based nonprofit design firm Civilla—walked people through a step-by-step process to ensure they are providing the IRS with the information necessary to receive their stimulus checks. The website has information on how to open a safe and affordable bank account, how to file a simple tax return for free, and how to provide the IRS with a current address.

The website has garnered more than 658,000 visitors and received mentions in over 70 media outlets around the country.

“While eligibility for these funds was nearly universal, we were concerned about administrative procedures that could end up denying or delaying stimulus checks to the most vulnerable people,” said Poverty Solutions Director Luke Shaefer. “We needed to act to ensure the timely delivery of aid to the people who needed it most.”





**“To our authors, thank you for bringing Cradle to Kindergarten to us. And for your work outlining the challenges that families face, and the strategies that we can all take to ensure all children have access to quality early childhood education.”**

**—U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan (NH)**



## FROM CRADLE TO KINDERGARTEN: A NEW PLAN TO COMBAT INEQUALITY

As every parent knows, preschool often comes with a steep price tag. In Michigan and most other states, child care is often unaffordable, and studies show that only 26% of Michigan families can afford infant care.

By age 3, the inequality is clear: most rich kids in the U.S. attend preschool, while most poor kids do not, according to Poverty Solutions faculty affiliate and U-M Assistant Professor at the School of Education Christina Weiland and her co-authors in their book, “Cradle to Kindergarten: A New Plan to Combat Inequality.”

Between 2017 and 2019, the “Cradle to Kindergarten” authors made over 75 presentations to federal, state, and local governments; academic, policy research, and advocacy professionals; philanthropies; and professional conferences. This included events hosted by Poverty Solutions and the School of Education in both Michigan and Washington, D.C., where Weiland and her co-authors presented concrete plans to education organization leaders and policymakers.

However, since their book was first published, the world was confronted with a pandemic that only magnified levels of socioeconomic and ethnoracial inequality. Weiland and

her co-authors consequently released a second edition in 2021 in which they included updated proposals to address this new landscape, as well as guidance on how to effectively structure their proposals in a range of political contexts. Their research has played an important role in the early childhood education policies implemented in cities and states across the country as well as in federal legislation currently being considered by the U.S. Senate.

“States are going to need a vision for how to scale up high-quality early learning for all young kids. That’s exactly what our proposal offers,” Weiland said.

## CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONIES

Over the past five years, Poverty Solutions scholars have been recognized as thought leaders and anti-poverty experts at the federal level.

### STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

Poverty Solutions Director H. Luke Shaefer was called to Congress multiple times to discuss ways to strengthen the social safety net, especially for families with children. In 2015, he testified at a U.S. Senate Finance Committee hearing on welfare and poverty in America. At a Congressional briefing on how to promote child health equity through the tax code in July 2020, Shaefer outlined opportunities to enhance the Earned Income Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. In September 2021, Shaefer testified about the impact of pandemic relief programs at a hearing before the U.S. House Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Crisis.



**“Luke, your work, including your book ‘\$2 a Day,’ has shaped the way policymakers and the public think about poverty and justice in America. I quote you all the time.”**

**—Sherrod Brown, U.S. Senator (OH)**



### AUTO INSURANCE COSTS AS AN ECONOMIC MOBILITY ISSUE

Joshua Rivera, formerly a senior data and policy analyst at Poverty Solutions who now is the Economic Stability Administration policy director at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, testified before the U.S. House Financial Services Committee’s Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee in May 2019.

Rivera commented on how the high cost of auto insurance perpetuates the cycle of poverty and explained how certain auto insurance rate-setting practices have a disproportionate impact on drivers with low incomes and Black people. Rivera was invited to the hearing, titled “Examining Discrimination in the Automobile Loan and Insurance Industries,” based on his analysis of auto insurance costs in Michigan, which helped inform the state’s auto insurance reform passed in 2019.



### BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE TO PROVIDE NEW ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Joshua Edmonds, the City of Detroit’s director of digital inclusion and a former Detroit economic mobility fellow supported by Poverty Solutions, spoke at a hearing on “empowering and connecting communities through digital equity and internet



adoption” held by the U.S. House Communications and Technology Subcommittee in January 2020.

Edmonds outlined how digital equity and internet access affect access to online banking, health care, job opportunities that require tech skills, participation in Census 2020, and kids’ ability to do their homework. He shared his strategy for developing public-private partnerships in Detroit to promote digital inclusion and the need for more federal support to bring those efforts to scale.

### USING DATA TO IMPROVE SERVICES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

Jennifer Erb-Downward, a senior research associate at Poverty Solutions who specializes in family homelessness, testified at a virtual hearing held by the U.S. House Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education in May 2021.

The hearing was titled “Picking up the Pieces: Strengthening Connections with Students Experiencing Homelessness and Children in Foster Care,” and Erb-Downward discussed her research on the educational challenges faced by students who do not have a stable place to live. She also highlighted the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult for schools to identify and support students experiencing homelessness.

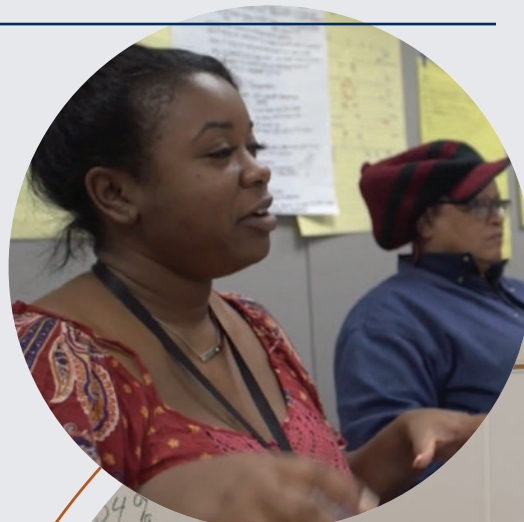


## BUILDING ON OUR MOMENTUM

Over the past five years, Poverty Solutions has come a long way. There is still much to be done to prevent and alleviate poverty, and the initiative plans to build on its momentum to achieve a much larger impact in the years ahead. We will continue to:

- Analyze how policies and systems affect rates of poverty in the U.S. and promote policies that reduce it at the local, state, and federal level;
- Address the connections between poverty and structural racism and support the work that U-M's Center for Social Solutions is leading to explore potential avenues for community-based reparations;
- Broaden and deepen partnerships with faculty across U-M's three campuses, fostering an interdisciplinary approach to poverty alleviation;
- Strengthen partnerships with community organizations in Detroit, Washtenaw County, and northern Michigan to ensure Poverty Solutions' research is responsive to real-world needs;
- Provide undergraduate students, graduate students, and early-career professionals with research support, training, and coursework to build the next generation of leaders working to eliminate poverty; and
- Deepen relationships with city governments and the State of Michigan to inform the design and implementation of eviction and foreclosure prevention efforts, child care subsidy outreach, and other public assistance programs.

Our communities have faced profound challenges over the past few years. These challenges have highlighted the urgency of the work that Poverty Solutions is doing to reduce and eliminate poverty. We hope you will partner with us to confront and address these challenges together.



## OUR TEAM

### FACULTY DIRECTORS:

**Faculty Director**  
H. Luke Shaefer

**Associate Faculty Director for Educational Programs**  
Kristin Seefeldt

**Associate Faculty Director and Director of Communications**  
Mara Ostfeld

### STAFF:

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Leonymae Aumentado

**Student Engagement & Strategic Projects Manager**  
Trevor Bechtel

**Assistant Director of Community Initiatives**  
Afton Branche-Wilson

**Assistant Director of Policy Impact**  
Patrick Cooney

**SummerWorks and Strategic Projects Manager**  
Zoë Erb

**Senior Research Associate**  
Jennifer Erb-Downward

**Data and Policy Analyst**  
Samiul Jubaed

**Senior Strategic Projects Manager**  
Karen Otzen Kling

**Senior Data and Evaluation Manager**  
Amanda Nothafft

**Data and Evaluation Manager**  
Natalie Peterson

**Administrative Coordinator**  
Armeka Richey

**Project Lead, DMACS**  
Sharon Sand

**Senior Communications Specialist**  
Lauren Slagter

**Web Developer**  
Liz Smith

**Managing Director**  
Julia Weinert

### POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW:

**Postdoctoral Research Fellow**  
Alexa Eisenberg

### DETROIT FELLOWS:

**City of Detroit Youth Workforce Development Fellow**  
Chardae Caine

**American Rescue Plan Act Implementation Junior Fellow**  
Cydney Gardner-Brown

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**POVERTY SOLUTIONS**  
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

## SECTION 3 NEXT STEPS

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