

## Cory 2020 responses

Submitted: 12/12/19

### What are the top five specific ways that you, as President, would increase economic opportunity for low-income Americans and decrease poverty, hunger, and homelessness?

I have put forward a comprehensive plan to strengthen the federal safety net and make strides towards ending child poverty in America. Among the proposals included in my plan:

**1. Strengthen the safety net and create a “child allowance” for families with kids.**

While the Trump administration has repeatedly sought to cut benefits even further, I will increase the maximum SNAP benefit by 30 percent by adopting the more realistic “Low Cost Food Plan,” rescind Trump rules gutting “categorical eligibility” and stripping food from people who can’t find steady work, expand access to summer meals including in rural communities, and expand the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children to include all kids eligible for SNAP or free and reduced price school lunch. I will also relieve all school lunch debt and fight for universal free school lunch — because no child should go hungry at school. I will also strengthen TANF by restoring total TANF funding to its 1996 inflation-adjusted levels and ensure that it stays at that level in the future, and by requiring that states target their TANF funds to children and families living in poverty. As president, I will fight to expand the Child Tax Credit and authorize a monthly payment program to provide families with a \$300 monthly allowance for younger kids and a \$250 monthly allowance for older kids up to age 18. I will also make the credit indexed to inflation and fully refundable, which would mean that all eligible families receive the full credit amount. Researchers at Columbia University found that implementing a program along these lines would cut the child poverty rate by nearly half.

**2. Criminal Justice Reform.** I will work with Congress to pass my *Next Step Act* to reduce recidivism rates and ensure those who have been incarcerated have the tools they need to be successful upon their release. Roughly three-quarters of the inmates released from prison each year end up back behind bars within five years of their release. We need to “Ban the Box” to prohibit federal employers and contractors from asking a job applicant about their criminal history until the final stages of the interview process, remove the ban on public assistance and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for formerly incarcerated nonviolent drug offenders, and improve the ability of those behind bars to stay in touch with their loved ones — which has a proven effect on reducing the risk of recidivism.

**3. Empower workers and raise wages for hard-working Americans.** Over the last 40 years, while worker productivity has increased 70 percent, the hourly pay of typical workers has remained essentially flat. Americans are working harder and producing more than ever before, but they aren’t seeing the benefits. As president, I will ensure that

all workers have the right to collectively bargain for higher wages and better benefits; and, I will ensure that no worker in America is paid less than \$15 an hour. I will also fight to pass my Rise Credit, which would give every working American, including unpaid caregivers and low-income students, a cost-of-living refund of up to \$4,000 each year.

4. **End homelessness.** My plan to provide affordable housing for all Americans would take steps to end homelessness, including by enacting a renters' credit to cap rental costs at 30 percent of household income, increasing funding for anti-homelessness grants, and creating a National Eviction Right to Counsel Fund for those who face eviction.
5. **Make child care affordable.** In most states, child care now costs more than college tuition—most families spend about 10 percent of their total income on child care. When I am president, I will cap spending on child care at seven percent for low- and middle-class families, and provide free child care for families who earn less than 75 percent of their state's median income. My plan to provide quality, affordable child care to all Americans would also ensure universal access to preschool programs for all 3- and 4-year olds and increase pay and training for child care providers to ensure that all child care providers are paid at least a living wage.

**What is your single greatest concrete career accomplishment to date that has increased economic opportunity for low-income Americans and/or decreased poverty, hunger, and homelessness?**

The fight to fix our criminal justice system is personal to me. Our criminal justice system should be keeping us safe, but instead it has been shuffling our most vulnerable citizens -- the poor, the mentally ill, and those with addiction problems -- into cages and coffins. I have seen firsthand how our criminal justice system preys on lower-income Black and Brown communities like the one I call home. Stuningly, there are now more African American men under criminal supervision than there were slaves in 1850. For those with convictions in their past, their record puts a lifetime cap on economic opportunity, keeping them from getting certain jobs, accessing federal benefits, and qualifying for occupational licenses.

While in the United States Senate I have introduced more than a dozen proposals to reform our criminal justice reform. I am proud to say that last year, Congress passed the *First Step Act*, the most significant overhaul of our criminal justice system in a decade. The *First Step Act* represented real progress: reducing mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent drug offenders, applying the *Fair Sentencing Act* to the 3,000 people who were convicted of crack offenses before the law went into effect, and banning the shackling of women who are pregnant, in delivery, or in postpartum recovery, among other things. Just this week, the Senate included my *Fair Chance Act* in broader legislation destined for passage this Congress; my bill will prohibit the federal

government and federal contractors from asking job applicants about their criminal history--often referred to as "ban the box."

But there is much work still to be done. That starts with passing my bill, *The Next Step Act*, sweeping legislation reforming all aspects of our criminal justice system and creating economic opportunity for justice-involved individuals. The *Next Step Act* would remove the barriers for people with criminal convictions to receiving an occupational license for jobs, such as hairdressers and taxi drivers. It would also remove the ban on public assistance and federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for formerly incarcerated nonviolent drug offenders as well as creating a community reinvestment fund that would facilitate job training, reentry services, and health education programs.

**As President, how would you staff and structure the development, leadership, and daily management of your economic opportunity, poverty, hunger, and homelessness initiatives in your White House, Cabinet, and Administration?**

Unlike President Trump, who has appointed leaders intent on undermining their own agencies, I will select cabinet members who actually qualified for their positions, represent our country's diversity, believe in the mission of their department or agency, and have a track-record of working with experts and stakeholders to bring our country together. I am the only United States Senator who goes home to a low-income, majority Black and Brown community, and every decision I make is informed by the struggles and challenges of my neighbors in Newark. In considering key appointments, I will prioritize those who represent the public interest-- not corporate interests.

I also recognize that many of the issues facing people and families in poverty do not fit neatly into a single program or agency. My administration will actively facilitate cross-agency structures, including through White House-level offices and councils, to work across programs, engage with local leaders to identify and scale best practices, and use data to evaluate impacts over time.