Living Wages & Local Hire: There are public costs and deep community impacts to low wages and unemployment. People living on low wages must depend on government benefits to survive. Around 60% of all workers making federal minimum wage receive some form of government assistance. 48% of families in New Orleans cannot afford a basic household budget: the costs of housing, child care, food, transportation, and health care - the basic necessities. And then there are entire communities locked out of work. These numbers mask the clear racialized nature of inequality: we live in a city that is not only 2nd in income inequality but also where 52% of Black men are out of work an Black median earnings have dropped around 11% over the last decade. Cities can address these issues. Communities in New Orleans have fought hard to win good local protections for workers - a living wage ordinance that took effect Jan. 1 2016 requiring a living wage of $10.55/hr and 7 paid sick days a year, and a local hire ordinance passed in 2015 requiring that construction contractors hire 30% local residents - it is now time that these protections are enforced to have real impacts for our communities.

Right to Organize: Workers require the right to organize and collectively bargain to improve job quality. Through unions, workers win better wages, benefits and a voice on the job--and good union jobs mean stronger communities. Union workers earn 30 percent more than nonunion workers and are more likely to receive health care and pension benefits than those without a union. Only when workers can organize without fear of retaliation can we win the overarching changes our communities need. The city must stand in solidarity with workers who are organizing.

Jobs as Public Safety: tough on crime proposals disrupt families, neighborhoods, schools and workplaces and contribute to the public safety concerns they are supposed to allay. We know that crime in New Orleans is not a policing problem; its a poverty problem. We know that good jobs impact public safety. We propose more emphasis placed on solutions like a $15 minimum wage, stopping workforce discrimination and more funding for youth activities. The city can have real impacts on public safety by prioritizing its political and economic resources on expanding access to jobs and opportunities, instead of further criminalizing and incarcerating our communities.

Career Access: Workforce development strategies must be designed to improve poor-quality jobs held by low-income workers and ensure access to stable good jobs at the end of training pipelines. Too many workers are stuck in low-paying, dangerous, and unstable work and lack opportunity to create real careers. Partial solutions have been created, such as the Network for Economic Opportunity created out of a campaign to win jobs at the airport. Like many other “career” programs, it has created additional training opportunities without the resulting long-term stable careers for residents in this city. The city can intervene through commitments to full enforcement of local hire policies and additional interventions working directly with the private sector to improve jobs.
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