

# A Force for Action:

## CEO Action for Racial Equity's Focus Report

MARCH 2023



# THANK YOU

To our CEO Action for Racial Equity community,

As I reflect on the past two and a half years and what we've been able to accomplish together, I am tremendously proud. We activated our superpower - assembling a force of committed business executives and talented Fellows, along with the backing of their influential organizations. We built an innovative platform for action with focus areas determined by data, assessed by common sentiment, evaluated for sustainable impact, and amplified through networks.

Your dedication, whether lending talent, making connections, or adjusting business strategies, has made the CEO Action for Racial Equity (CEOARE) Fellowship what it is today. Each and every CEOARE signatory has leaned into areas of interest within our portfolio moving us closer to improving the lives of so many.

In the pages that follow, you will see an overview of that work: people of different ideas, backgrounds and experiences coming together to make a difference in advancing societal well being. To me, this Fellowship is what true leadership is all about and I continue to be humbled to work alongside others who take action.

## **Roy Weathers**

*CEO, CEO Action for Racial Equity*

*Vice Chair Policy and Societal Engagement, PwC*



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# A Force for Action

2020 was a time of social upheaval in the United States. A global pandemic was just beginning and with it came widespread uncertainty and extreme disruption. The political landscape was highly contentious, and society was rocked by the killing of George Floyd, causing shock and outrage across the world. This historic turning point shed a spotlight on societal racial disparities - and the support for change echoed throughout the country.

Business leaders faced a perfect storm of issues that affected their colleagues, customers, and communities.

In June 2020, following months of social unrest driven largely by racial reckoning, a group of CEOs from CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion™ (CEO Action for D&I) came together to discuss the business community's role in addressing issues of societal racial equity. Key questions raised were:

- Should companies do more from a societal perspective to address societal racial disparities?
- Could sustainable change be made beyond this moment in time?
- Were there specific societal policy areas that could advance societal racial equity?
- Should companies lend their brands and dedicate their talent to focus on societal issues?
- The answer? A resounding 'YES'.

The convening of these organizations, grounded in these beliefs, led to the establishment of CEO Action For Racial Equity – a Fellowship that brings together top talent and resources to advance public policies and corporate engagement strategies to address systemic racism and social injustice while improving societal well-being.

While there was no set agenda, no blueprint for change, and no established working model, there was a shared belief that organizations could and should build societal bridges to close societal racial disparities and improve the lives and circumstances of the ~47 million Black Americans.

With diverse talent spanning industries and professions, we created a first-of-its-kind **force for action**.

# Collectively Taking a Stand



A group of CEOs, who took the CEO Action for D&I pledge to advance diversity and inclusion in their workplace, started the societal racial equity and social justice conversation and founded CEOARE.

“

When we founded CEO Action for Diversity & Inclusion in 2017, our focus was on advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in our workplaces. However, with the tragic murder of George Floyd in 2020, we recognized the need to expand our sphere of influence and take action both within and outside the four walls of our organizations. We recognized the important role the business community can play in supporting policies — at the federal, state and local levels — that advance racial equity, address social injustice and improve societal well-being. This is why, in October 2020, 100+ companies came together to launch CEO Action for Racial Equity, a first-of-its-kind initiative that mobilizes talent and resources from across Corporate America.”

- **Tim Ryan**, PwC US Chairman and CEO Action for D&I Steering Committee head

## Mission

To identify, develop and promote scalable and sustainable public policies and corporate engagement strategies that will address systemic racism, social injustice and improve societal well-being.

## Vision

To improve the quality of life for the 47M+ Black Americans through advocacy and advancement of solutions that seek to end systemic racism.



**By focusing on policies to improve the lives of Black Americans**, whose societal barriers to equity have historically been one of the highest, we can identify sustainable strategies that create **opportunities for marginalized groups—and society as a whole.**



# Our Strategic Foundation

Five areas underpin our success to date. Going forward, we will rely on these areas for a solid and enduring foundation.



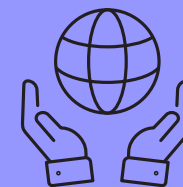
**Executing  
Our  
Portfolio**



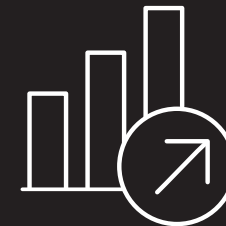
**Building  
Our  
Brand**



**Leveraging Our  
Superpower:  
Signatories +  
Fellows**



**Engaging Our  
Fellows in  
Meaningful  
Ways**



**Maintaining Our  
Data-driven  
Approach**

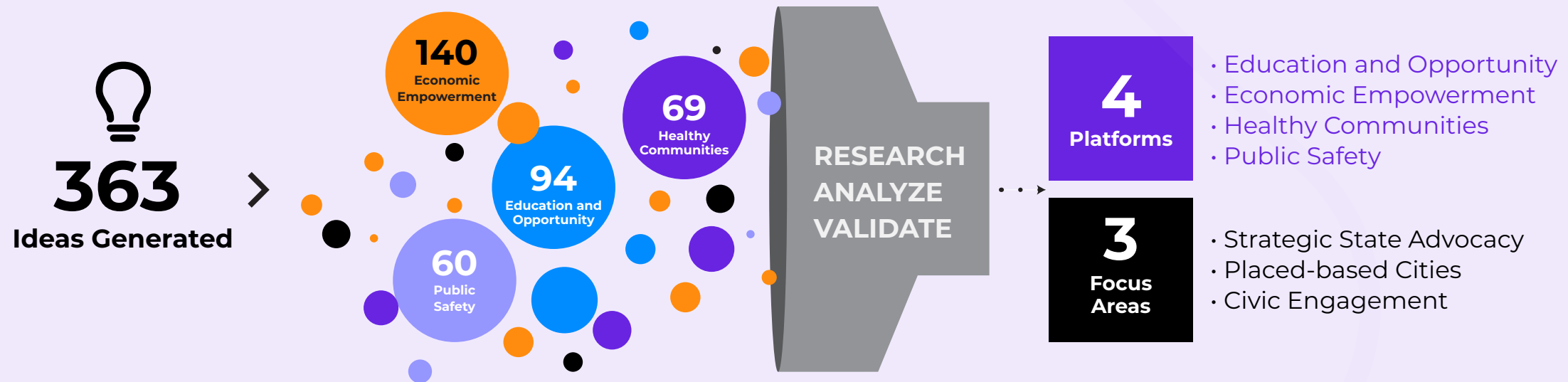


# Executing Our Portfolio

## Our Approach

The CEOARE Fellowship was founded with the straightforward strategic imperative: to focus on sustainable action. To achieve this goal, we executed a measured approach and developed an operating methodology that serves as the foundation for our work.

To determine our portfolio, we underwent a Fellowship-wide ideation, which yielded **over 360 dynamic ideas to close societal racial equity gaps**. We narrowed to those that had the most potential for sustained impact and to fulfill a societal need in the Black community.







# Executing Our Portfolio

## Meaningful and Sustainable

- Our portfolio amplifies natural interdependencies that exist between our policy advocacy, corporate engagement strategies, and focus areas.
- Our portfolio creates space for both increased stakeholder alignment and collaboration across multiple areas.

### Education and Opportunity



Closing the **Digital Divide**



Equity and Excellence in **Early Childhood Education (ECE)**



**Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)**

### Economic Empowerment



**Business Diversity**



**Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs)**



**Fair Chance Hiring**

### Healthy Communities



A Path Toward Greater **Food Equity**



**Racism: A Public Health Crisis (RAPHC)**



Expanding Access to **Telehealth**

### Public Safety



**Decriminalizing Poverty: Fines, Fees and Cash Bail**



**Law Enforcement Transparency and Accountability (LETA)**

## FOCUS AREAS

### Strategic States

Massachusetts  
Michigan  
New York  
Texas

### Placed-based Cities

Baltimore  
Birmingham  
Dallas  
Detroit  
Oakland

### Civic Engagement

State  
Federal

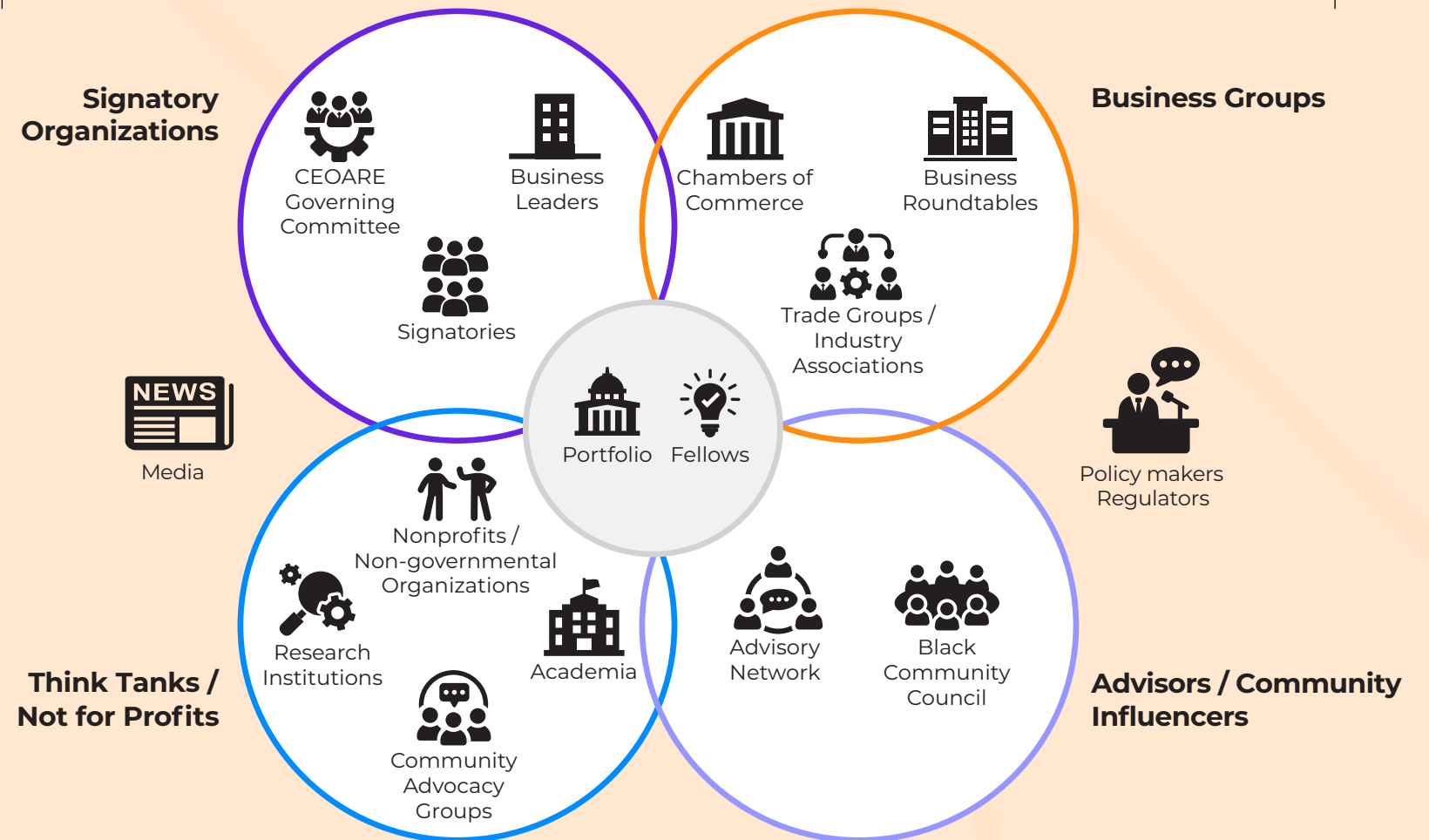


# Building Our Brand

## Image and Reach

- We built positive brand recognition, both locally and nationally, with policymakers and key organizations across the political spectrum and the corporate engagement ecosystem – becoming known for our data-driven, business-led approach.
- We are proud of the brand credibility and the awareness we created with a significant and diverse group of influential collaborators, supporters, and coalitions.
- Our brand image and relationship building remain core to our long-term efforts to drive progress towards our mission and vision.

## CEOARE Ecosystem



CEOARE was named a winner in the PR News 2022 Social Impact Awards in the Most Impactful Response to Racial Injustice category.

## Communications Amplify our Brand and our Work:

- Weekly Progress through Policy video podcasts
- Monthly CEOARE Digest
- Over 2,000 CEOARE tweet engagements; Over 40,000 CEOARE tweet impressions



# Leveraging Our Superpower: Signatories + Fellows

## Dedicated and Committed

- Our work would not be possible without the engagement of the CEO Action D&I signatories who joined the Fellowship in support of our mission and vision.
- We leveraged their collective “superpower” - along with their Fellows - to engage ~700 organizations, including policy think tanks, community-based groups, academia, business-led coalitions and advocacy groups to amplify our mission, vision, and work.





# Engaging Our Fellows In Meaningful Ways

## Leveraging the Power of the Many

- Our Fellows, both active and alumni, are the heart, soul, and backbone of the Fellowship.
- Every Fellow is a different professional today because of their passion and energy and the Fellowship's single-mission focus.
- Many Fellows joined as seasoned professionals. However, all experienced transformative growth, not just from a knowledge and skillset perspective, but from actively engaging in the work the itself.
- The work of the Fellows does not stop once their Fellowship tenure ends – it has a multiplier effect that continues to extend into many facets of their lives – both personally and professionally.

Over the course of the Fellowship, **Fellows gained over 300 hours** of value-added transferrable skills, knowledge, and insights; as well as opportunities to develop and appreciate a deeper understanding of historical and current policy and societal challenges.

### Portfolio Engagement

- Coalition building and community organizing
- Policy research, analysis and monitoring
- Development of action-oriented corporate engagement solutions

### Communications

- Public speaking and storytelling
- Executive communication and technical writing
- Event management

### Program Management

- Building metrics and fit for purpose frameworks
- Developing proprietary data insights and modeling
- Fellow to Fellow leadership opportunities

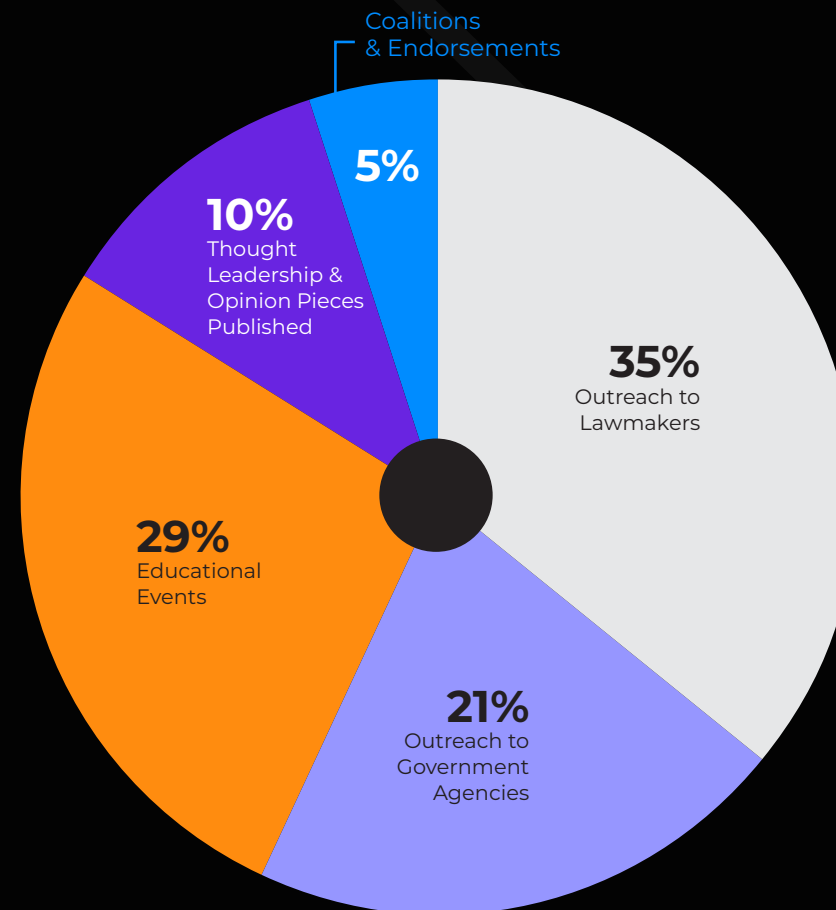


# Maintaining Our Data-driven Approach

## Performance and Execution

- We intentionally focus on the use of data, research, and analytics to support our work.
- We have an impressive and growing collection of analytic tools, stories and experiences which advances our work and brings unique and exclusive value to our signatories.
- We established key performance indicators (KPIs) which:
  - Reinforce our brand as a data-driven organization that is supported by action.
  - Provide a common language for communication and measurement.

## By the Numbers 12.31.2022



## Of the KPIs we track...

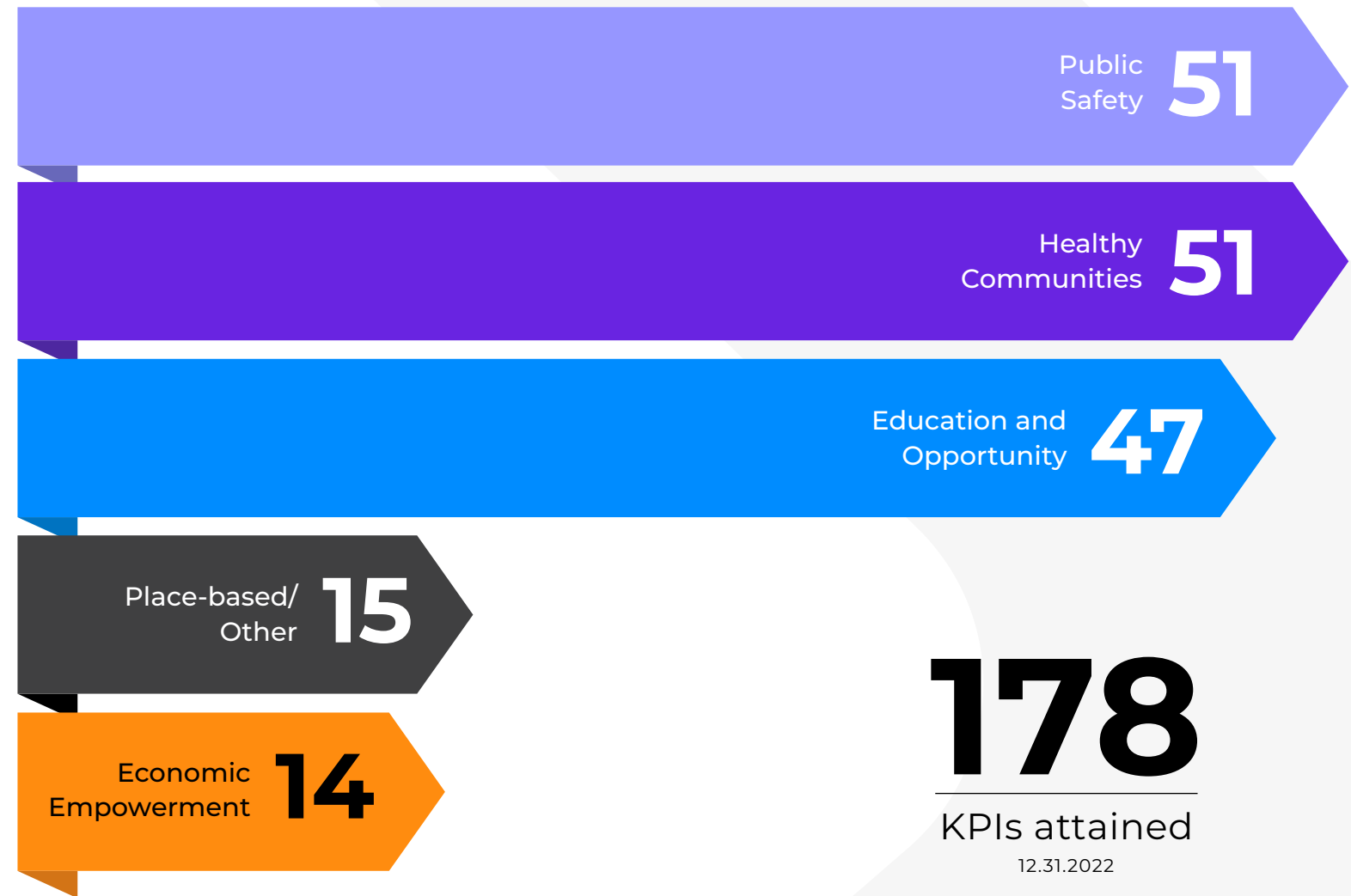
- **Advocacy** is a core focus. Over 60% of our time has focused on amplifying our work through coalitions and endorsements and outreach to lawmakers and government agencies.
- **Education** is paramount. Led by our corporate engagement and policy teams, we invested over a third of our time hosting, sponsoring or participating in influential education events to raise awareness on the issues and solutions that matter most.
- **Awareness** remains critical. We leveraged our collective Fellowship superpower to publish thought leadership reports and opinion/editorial pieces.

# Progress Across Our Portfolio

A data-driven approach informed the KPIs we use to track success and measure progress over time. These KPIs include:

- Policy-related legislative and advocacy activities, including advocacy letters and written testimony.
- Interactive educational sessions focused primarily on corporate engagement.
- Targeted efforts to raise awareness and influence a supportive action, including panel participation and event sponsorships.

## Measured Progress Across Our Solutions...



# Public Policy Spotlight

## Early Childhood Education

The Early Childhood Education bill in Massachusetts includes four out of five CEOARE priorities to impact racial equity including loan forgiveness, grant funding and fairness, data collection, and implicit bias and cultural competency training for providers. Legislation with our priorities has been introduced in the 2023 Massachusetts House and Senate legislative session.

## Community Development Financial Institutions

CEOARE advocated to Congress for \$360 million in FY2022 funding for the U.S. Department of Treasury's CDFI Fund, which promotes economic revitalization in distressed communities. We encouraged lawmakers to fully fund and expand CDFIs, which provide a critical on ramp to access banking services, provide financial security, and improve the quality of life for people who are underserved by traditional financial services.

## Telehealth

The passage of the 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act extended vital healthcare policies through 2024. This extension is a win for CEOARE and our collaborators who championed solutions to avoid the "telehealth cliff" where virtual care flexibilities were temporary and limited to the duration of the public health emergency.

## Law Enforcement Transparency and Accountability

In November 2022, CEOARE released its report, [Advancing Transparency and Accountability: A Framework for a Law Enforcement Officer Accountability Database](#), which provides a framework for accountability databases that could be a viable source for future local, state, and federal policy.

# Public Policy Spotlight: **Advocating Together**

## Our Voice in Action

Consistent with CEOARE's goal of bringing a racial equity voice to our work, the **Digital Divide**, **Food Equity**, and **Telehealth** teams responded jointly to the Congressional Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Caucus Request For Information – urging the leaders to evaluate policies and legislation from a racial equity lens and recognize the role structural racism and bias plays in exacerbating health disparities specifically for communities of color.

### *Excerpt:*

“Health disparities have been documented for decades and reflect longstanding structural, societal, and systemic inequities rooted in racism and discrimination. From healthcare to food equity to education, Black Americans have not experienced the same quality of services and opportunities and race is the common denominator when it comes to these disparities.”

*CEOARE letter to Congressional SDOH leaders  
September 21, 2021*



# Corporate Engagement Spotlight

Our corporate engagement solutions:

- **Business Diversity**
- **Fair Chance Hiring**
- **HBCUs**

are supported by well-researched materials designed to engage and bring value-added benefits to our signatories

CEOARE hosted 12 educational sessions, with a total of ~ 950 attendees, including participation from:

- Two Fortune 500 CEOs
- Four HBCU presidents
- Nine previously incarcerated individuals currently employed and thriving in their fields
- 38 subject-matter specialists

45 signatories committed to do more in the HBCU space, selecting 24 distinct HBCUs to work with and support programs

30 signatories aligned to the CEOARE Business Diversity pledge, committing to the fair inclusion of Black suppliers in their procurement activities aspiring to:

- Increase equity for Black suppliers across services
- Create more access to capital and networks for Black suppliers
- Develop growth and scale opportunities for Black suppliers

18 signatories committed to review their hiring practices to be more equitable towards justice-involved communities.

- Four of these 18 signatories are currently running pilots that include hiring from this untapped talent pool

# Education and Opportunity

## Digital Divide

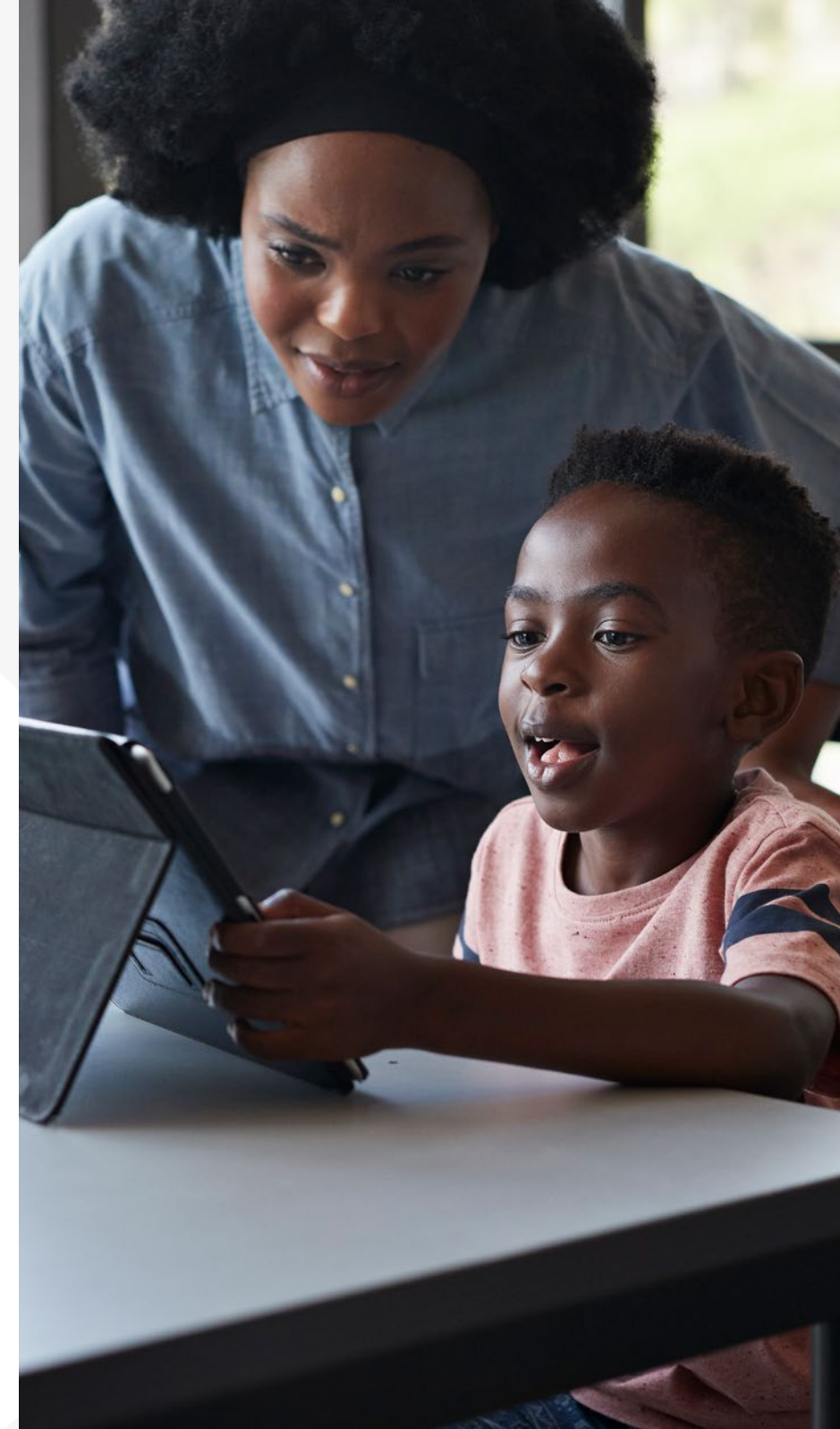
CEOARE continued its racially equitable approach to internet access, affordability, and adoption by supporting implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the fair and equitable distribution of the \$65B of funding for broadband infrastructure through a digital discrimination lens.

## Early Childhood Education

CEOARE issued a letter to the Massachusetts Appropriations Committee highlighting the need to continue investment in early education and care. Our advocacy contributed to landmark investments being included in both the FY2023 budget and the subsequent Economic Development bill.

## Historically Black Colleges and Universities

CEOARE participated at the 2022 United Negro College Fund's UNITE conference: "Delivering on the Promise of Black Higher Education" - which focused on efforts to sustain academic excellence, improve operational effectiveness, and accelerate innovation at Black colleges and universities. CEOARE also launched its HBCU engagement and education series, with consistently high participation across all stakeholders.



# Economic Empowerment

## Business Diversity

CEOARE hosted several virtual educational series including:

- *A Conversation with Black-owned Businesses* featured five CEOs of Black-owned businesses who discussed their challenges and opportunities.
- *Business Diversity – Thinking Outside the Supplier Diversity Box* featured three CEOs, who discussed shifting from a 60's era supplier diversity strategy to a business diversity ecosystem strategy.
- *The Big Three in Minority Certification*, engaged leaders from the three leading minority certification agencies for Black-owned businesses, who shared their evolution, current and future states.

## Community Development Financial Institutions

CEOARE engaged policymakers to support the need for CDFIs; making the case that CDFIs provide affordable capital and financial services to underserved communities. CDFIs are a valuable source of 1) financing and investment for small community businesses, 2) banking and financial services for unbanked and underbanked individuals, 3) mortgage financing for low-income and first-time homebuyers, and 4) economic empowerment through financial literacy.

## Fair Chance Hiring

CEOARE screened and conducted a moving and informative panel discussion of APART, a powerful documentary following three women during and post-incarceration and the impact their time away had and continues to have on their lives, families, and communities.



# Healthy Communities

## Food Equity

CEOARE advocated for the USDA to close the food insecurity gap by reassessing and modernizing the benefit allocation formula used by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), resulting in a historic 27% increase in SNAP benefits. And, as a member of the Alliance to End Hunger, CEOARE continues to bring a social justice and racial equity lens to advocating for improved access to and affordability of healthy food options in Black communities.

## Racism: a Public Health Crisis

CEOARE provided recommendations to the Department of Health and Human Services on the proposed National Center on Antiracism and Health Equity Center (Center) which included requests that 1) HHS leverage aspects of The Anti-Racism in Public Health Act of 2021 to inform the charter and goals for the proposed Center, 2) utilize grants, funding programs, and budgets for resourcing, 3) establish principles and guidelines with the BIPOC community, and 4) develop an interagency liaison working group to inform how the Center is developed and structured.

## Telehealth

CEOARE provided comments to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to help advance equity across the healthcare ecosystem. Our comments were reflected in CMS's finalized 2022 Physician Fee Schedule, including recommendations for coverage of audio-only telemental health services, incorporation of "home" as an approved originating site for telehealth services and a more expansive definition of "home".



# Public Safety

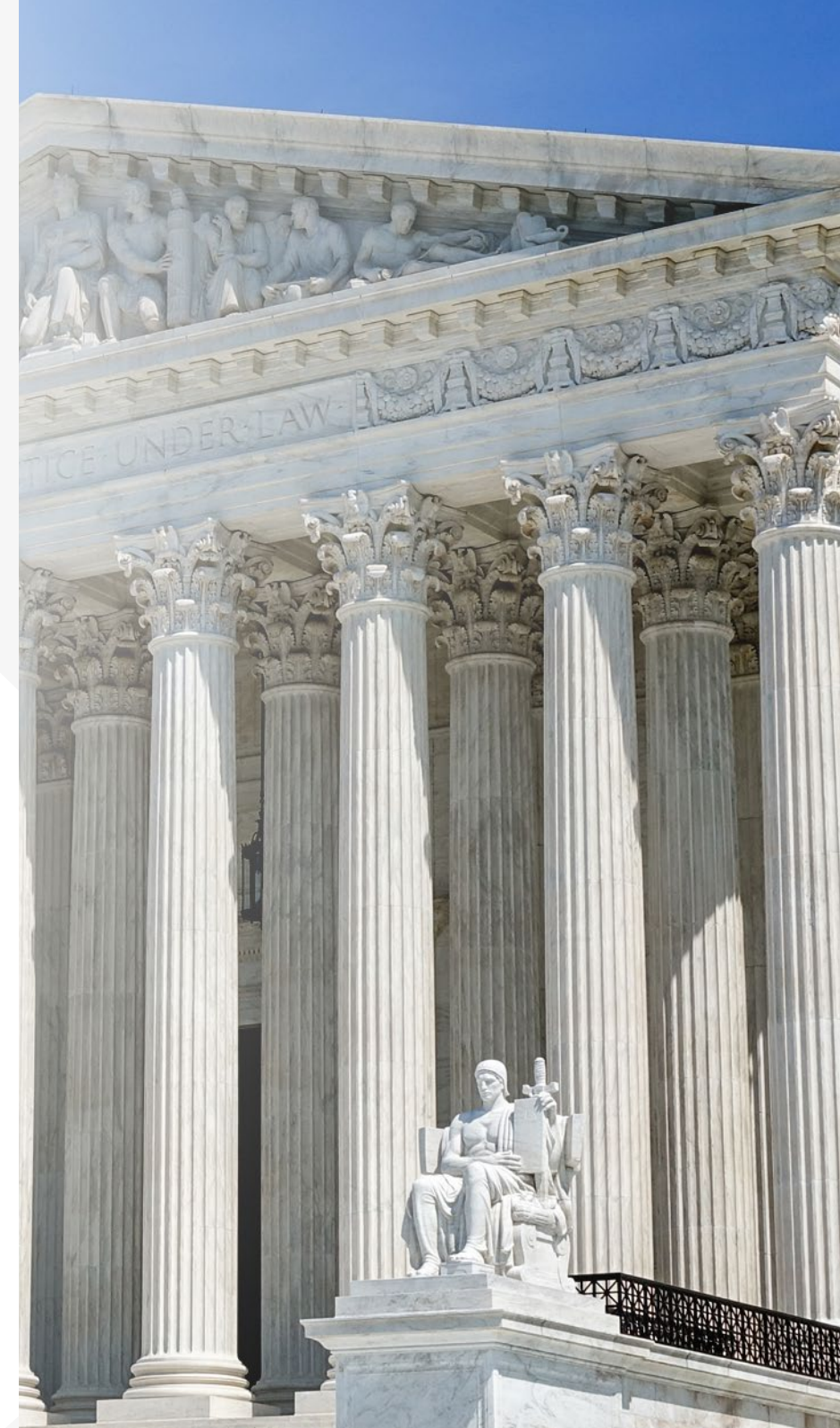
## Decriminalizing Poverty

CEOARE's advocacy yielded 20 letters to legislators to support legislation that seeks to end the criminalization of poverty, ultimately advancing two key pieces of legislation:

- The Driving for Opportunity Act passed the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee with bipartisan support in October 2021. Although the bill did not advance further in the last Congress, our collaborative and coalition-driven advocacy work continues.
- An Alabama debt-based driver's license bill moved out of the House and Senate Judiciary committees and passed the full Senate, signaling the most progress the issue has made thus far.

## Law Enforcement Transparency and Accountability

CEOARE provided written testimony in support of the D.C. database legislation in November 2021. The D.C. City Council unanimously passed the disciplinary officer database, as part of a larger police reform bill. The bill survived the Mayor's veto via an override vote by the City Council on January 19, 2023. The final bill included CEOARE's recommendations to establish record retention policies and a timely process for sending data for inclusion in the database. Under the D.C. Home Rule Act, the bill is pending Congressional review, with expected completion date by mid-May 2023.

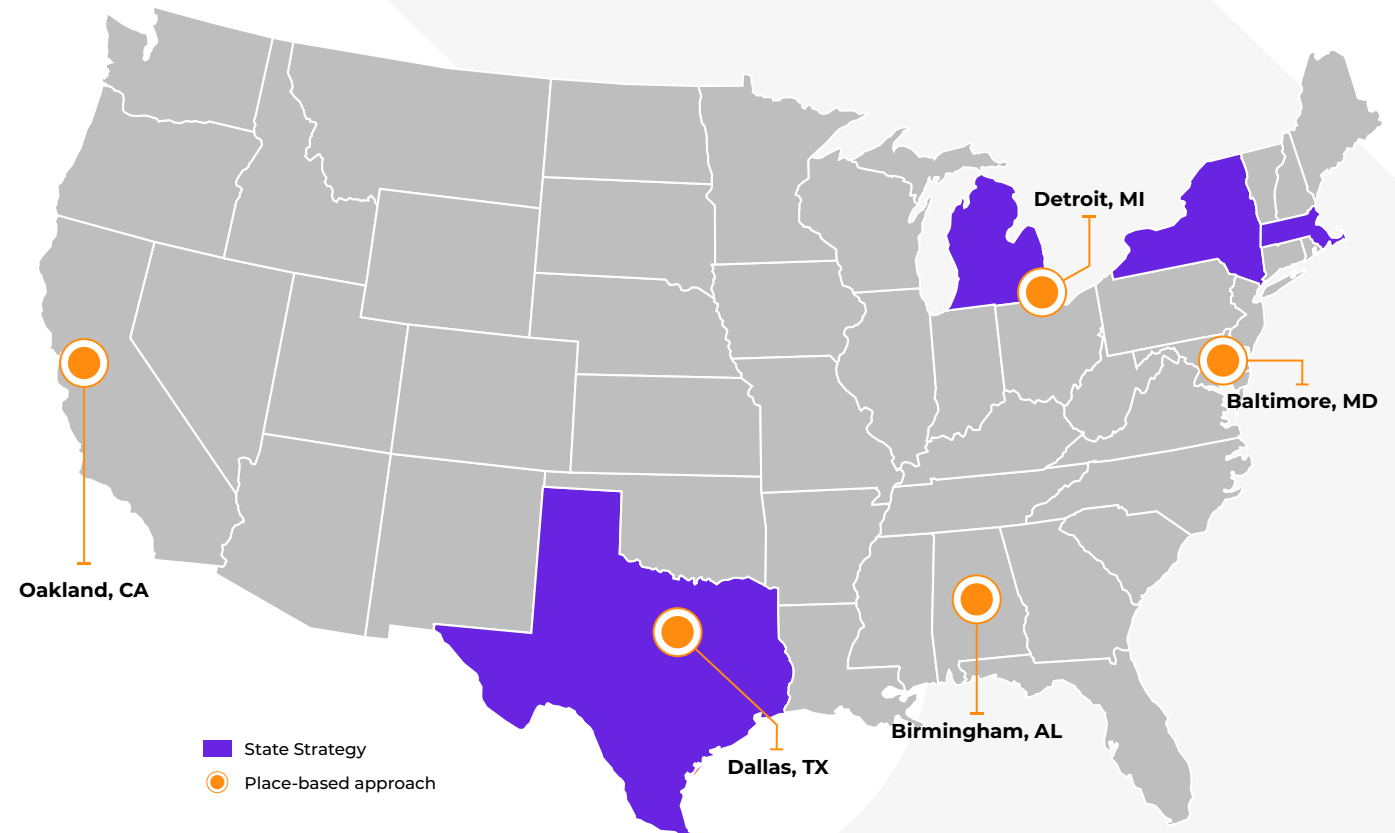


# A Local Approach to City, State, and Civic Engagement

## Key Highlights:

- **Civic Engagement:** CEOARE is committed to the advancement of an equitable, efficient, and effective electoral process that is consistent with democratic values. We advocated for the MA VOTES Act, which was signed into law June 2022.
- **Massachusetts, New York and Michigan:** CEOARE issued introductory letters to the governors highlighting our priorities in the respective states. CEOARE issued a follow up letter in 2023 to the new Massachusetts Governor's transition team re-emphasizing our priorities.
- **Detroit:** Conducted executive level meetings with Mayor Duggan and local business representatives as part of the launch of our community advocacy in Detroit.

Our place-based, state, and civic engagement focus leverages long-standing community knowledge, experience, and leadership to drive our relevant portfolio solutions at the grassroots level. We advocate across our portfolio within these targeted areas.



# Progress Spotlight: Oakland

## From Inception

We influenced Oakland's Enhanced Infrastructure Financing District (EIFD) study to include a racial equity lens to affordable housing and convinced the Oakland City Council to include East Oakland (due to its high Black population) in its study.

## To Progress and Advancement

Through our collaborative efforts, Oakland's City Council unanimously adopted a resolution of interest to form an EIFD.

### Collaborations

- **Amplified our Messaging**  
Influenced 10+ organizations, including C-suite members of local corporations and community-based organizations to write the Oakland City Council.
- **Galvanized the Community**  
Influenced community-based organizations and others to attend and speak at public city council/city finance committee meetings to influence Oakland policymakers' EIFD views.

### Education & Awareness

- **Listened and raised up the voices of Black Oaklanders;** conducted listening sessions and subsequently published a report outlining our findings.
- **Created a video** to educate the Fellowship, the Oakland community, and critical stakeholders on EIFDs.

### Advocacy

- **Issued two important letters** to city officials encouraging consideration of our recommendations.
- **Spoke with several city council members** and their staff to education them on the issue.
- **Spoke at two public city finance committee meetings and two city council meetings.**
- **At one mayoral candidate forum, a candidate specifically credited CEOARE** with bringing the EIFD opportunity to the city's attention during a public forum.





# Call to Action: Looking Ahead

We united with passion and purpose! We built a place where CEOs and their employees can come together to drive action for the betterment of society.

Feedback on our work from the business community, advisors and community leaders has been tremendous.

There is great excitement about the momentum built and admiration for our journey and achievements, thus far.

Going forward, we will continue to execute our public policy and corporate engagement strategies, hone our approach to areas of focus, grow our relationships, and expand our network of signatories and Fellows.

Through our actions, we will continue to help corporate America use its unique and impactful voice to drive actions that close disparities in the Black community and bring us all closer to racial equity.





## > Join Us and Take a Stand

Contact us to become a member of the Fellowship and amplify your efforts with those who are collectively seeking to make a societal difference.

[Click here](#) for a full list of signatory organizations who joined us.

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