POWER THROUGH KNOWLEDGE
THE 2017 URBAN INSTITUTE ANNUAL REPORT
A message from the Board Chair and Vice Chairs

The country needed the Urban Institute more than ever in 2017. We may be living in what’s been described as a “post-truth era,” but as leaders of Urban’s Board of Trustees, we know that strong, bipartisan support remains for the facts, evidence, and authoritative insights that Urban produces and that inform consequential choices about people and places in the United States.

We govern this organization to help ensure that evidence, not ideology, drives its intellectual pursuits. Each member of this board shares a set of values with Urban staff. Collectively, we are committed to expanding opportunity, strengthening families and communities, and making our public institutions effective and fair. We share a belief in honest inquiry, transparency about data and methods, and diversity of perspectives. We believe that research experts should be empowered to reach their own evidence-based conclusions. And we believe fiercely that facts matter.

Few organizations have the highly integrated approach that Urban offers. It works across policy silos to produce better results. And, in recent years, Urban has dramatically strengthened its capacity to communicate, provide advice and technical assistance, build learning communities, and much more. But it has retained its critical advantage—rigorous social science and economic research—and the ability to deeply mine data to draw insight.

We are proud of how Urban stepped up and into the fray in 2017’s contentious climate to deliver smart and timely analyses and recommendations that helped deepen understanding and forge a path forward on various social and economic issues. Urban’s work shaped the national debate on front-page issues; it also informed local strategies and helped nonprofits better serve their clients in communities around the country.

Looking ahead, we are excited to join Urban experts as they think about how to harness disruptive forces of change to shape our communities and our nation for the better. We will continue to support the use of cutting-edge research technology to improve how our experts approach their work.

We are thankful for your continued partnership and support for this one-of-a-kind institution.

Sincerely,

Jamie S. Gorelick
Chair

Freeman A. Hrabowski III
Vice Chair

N. Gregory Mankiw
Vice Chair
A message from the President

Over this past extraordinary year, Urban Institute researchers followed the evidence where it led them, without fear or favor, as they have for nearly five decades.

Urban’s work shaped the country’s understanding of the impact of various plans to alter the Affordable Care Act and how different people, the deficit, and the economy would be affected by tax reform. Our insights helped frame the debate and sometimes drove policymakers to modify their proposals in response to the tough questions posed by Urban analyses.

Meanwhile, in cities around the country, Urban helped nonprofits understand if their programs were working and how to deepen their impact. We helped philanthropists make better social investments. And we developed a new cloud-based tool to help researchers nationwide manage and analyze big data.

I am deeply proud of all this work and how Urban proves every day that facts matter. Today’s scholars must be rigorous and transparent, subject to scrutiny and continuous improvement. But they also must be nimble, fast-moving, and savvy in using technology, data visualization, storytelling, and social media to reach new audiences and ultimately to make a difference for families and communities. Urban does all of that—with sophistication and integrity.

As in the 1960s when Urban was founded, our society is marked by turmoil and strife. But I also see signs of hope and resilience.

New generations of changemakers are seeking insights that Urban can gain from new sources of data and research technology. Others also are insisting that communities and people have a say in policy choices that affect their lives. Urban can give people voice by engaging them in gathering evidence and shaping solutions. We are continuously evolving, but always evidence based. And we are positioned, as always, to elevate today’s fast-moving debates and partner with forward-thinking changemakers in government and across the private and social sectors.

We are grateful for your support and partnership along the way. You make it possible for Urban to provide the power through knowledge to expand opportunity, promote well-being, strengthen communities, and advance democracy. Thank you.

Warmly,

Sarah Rosen Wartell
President
EXPANDING OPPORTUNITY

Our work bolsters efforts across America to help families get ahead, live with dignity and autonomy, and achieve their full potential.
Reimagining upward mobility

Urban supported and staffed the US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty, a collection of 24 leaders from academia, the faith community, philanthropy, and the private sector. The Partnership's challenge? Figure out what it would take to dramatically increase mobility from poverty in America.

Funder: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Urban contributed to reshaping the national dialogue on poverty by designing and facilitating community gatherings that challenged conventional ideas about upward mobility. For these conversations, we brought Partnership members together with people impacted by the structural forces shaping mobility in diverse communities across the US, including Detroit, Silicon Valley, the Mississippi Delta, and Brooklyn’s Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. The evidence-informed process led by Urban helped the Partnership coalesce around a new framework of interlocking strategies for achieving upward mobility that appeals across the ideological spectrum. This comprehensive concept—grounded in people and what matters to them, rather than in such solely economic measures as family income—is now influencing a new chapter of national and local philanthropy. It’s also inspiring other changemakers to reimagine how they tackle poverty and expand opportunity in America.

WHAT DOES MOBILITY FROM POVERTY LOOK LIKE?

It’s all people achieving a reasonable standard of living with the dignity that comes from having power over their lives and being engaged in and valued by their community.
Creating stability for struggling families

We launched the **From Safety Net to Solid Ground** initiative in 2017 as Congress and state legislatures considered significant changes to long-standing programs that provide assistance with health care, housing, child care, and more. The initiative draws upon our unique microsimulation models and our expertise in every aspect of safety net policy to equip leaders with timely, accessible analyses of how proposed changes would affect families.

**Funders:** Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Pritzker Children’s Initiative, David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Our sophisticated modeling tools clarified how transforming the safety net would affect the health and economic well-being of millions of families, making Urban a go-to source for decisionmakers engaged in fast-moving debates. And our comprehensive review of work requirements across programs helped deepen understanding among many stakeholders in this national dialogue. Urban’s findings informed media coverage, prompted briefings for congressional staff, and were shared by members of Congress, governors, state legislators, and advocacy organizations.

Illustration by Shannon Ryan.

What is microsimulation modeling?

Urban has designed and enhanced over decades a suite of six microsimulation models, computer programs that forecast how policy changes, behaviors, and demographic shifts could affect people—and what those individual outcomes mean for an entire population. The defining strength of microsimulation models is that they can estimate who wins and who loses under a wide range of “what if” scenarios. Urban’s microsimulation expertise is just one aspect of our data and research technology capabilities.
HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

One reason President Johnson sought to create Urban was to provide a credible, independent voice to assess the effectiveness of War on Poverty programs. Urban has been doing that ever since, bringing wide-ranging expertise on many of the efforts Johnson created, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps. In the early 2000s, our work resulted in a key policy shift: After our analyses revealed that many eligible families were not receiving nutritional assistance because of unnecessary red tape, lawmakers changed enrollment policies, giving millions more families access to food.

FINDING

Changes to key safety net programs in the fiscal year 2018 budget proposal could lead nearly 2.9 million families of moderate means to lose at least $2,500 in annual resources. Some 75 percent of families experiencing a change in resources include at least one child, senior, or person living with a disability.
We demonstrate to decisionmakers how their choices affect the physical and financial well-being of families.
Shaping the debate around the future of health care

Using our sophisticated modeling tools, Urban’s Health Policy Center estimated the cost and coverage effects at the national and state levels of every major proposal in the debate on alternatives to the Affordable Care Act (ACA). And as leaders engaged in the health care debate sought strategies to tackle escalating opioid addictions nationwide, Urban experts shared evidence on the role that state Medicaid programs can play in addressing the growing public health crisis.

Funders: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others

Urban’s rapid-response analyses of 2017 proposals to repeal and replace the ACA significantly shaped the national debate over the legislation’s future. Our researchers dug into the individual aspects of health care proposals, assessing how changes to the system would affect access to care for families, older adults, and children. The timely, steady drumbeat of outreach and insight that we delivered served as a critical, authoritative resource for legislative staff, decisionmakers, media, and advocates immersed in the health care debate. Our findings—typically released weeks before similar findings from the Congressional Budget Office—were widely cited in national and local media. Lawmakers in both parties repeatedly expressed concern over access to care in a debate that ultimately left most ACA policies in place.

FINDING

More than 9.5 million workers and 5.2 million of their family members gained health insurance coverage during the first six years of the ACA. Those coverage gains were even greater for workers in occupations that previously had lower coverage rates as well as for workers living in Medicaid expansion states.
Improving families’ financial health

Urban launched two online data tools in 2017 to share insights and solutions about family financial health. Our examination of the impact of financial instability on people and cities—presented in an accessible, data-rich online dashboard—demonstrated that a city’s economic progress depends on the financial health of its residents. And building on our robust and influential body of work on financial well-being, we released “Debt in America,” an interactive map showing how medical debt burdens vary by county and by race. In related work, our researchers found that families who have health insurance are less likely to have past-due medical debt and that past-due debt of any type can affect access to credit, the price of credit, and access to jobs and housing.


Our research on how savings affect families’ ability to weather financial shocks and the implications for communities received high praise from EARN, a nonprofit that promotes asset building and microsavings for low- and moderate-income households. EARN’s CEO invited our researchers to present at the kick-off for EARN’s SaverLife program, which helps families establish a regular habit of savings and has enrolled more than 100,000 members nationwide. “We’re not just using your research,” EARN’s communications director said of Urban’s insights, “it’s the foundation of our work.”

Urban’s partnership with the Aspen Institute’s Finance Forward Initiative last year and our “Financial Health of Residents” dashboard brought our work to the attention of city mayors and treasurers. Our experts met with city leaders across the US to discuss potential solutions to financial instability. The insights we shared are now being used by many decisionmakers to improve their residents’ ability to build savings and reach stable ground.

Debt in America: An Interactive Map
FINDING

Nationwide, 18 percent of people have medical debt in collections, at a median of $681. That share grows to 21 percent for people of color, who have a median $720 in medical debt in collections. Nonelderly black Americans are particularly vulnerable. Inequalities in income and wealth, fueled by structural racism and historically discriminatory policies, likely contribute to these higher rates of past-due medical debt by making it more difficult for some black Americans to pay for care.

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

Urban has been integral to the national health care conversation for decades by helping lawmakers understand the scope of the country’s health care problems and costs. Our researchers were the first to count the uninsured in the early 1980s, and in the early 2000s we developed options for health care reform in Massachusetts, which became the model for the Affordable Care Act.
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

We partner with city and state leaders to tackle complex problems, create inclusive communities, and improve residents’ lives.
Measuring the cost of segregation in Chicago

Urban experts laid out the concrete, real-world costs of racial and economic segregation, which helped Chicago’s Metropolitan Planning Council build momentum for solutions.

Funders: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago Community Trust

In Chicago, we documented the costs of racial and economic segregation—lower incomes, fewer college graduates, and higher homicide rates—and estimated the benefits of being more inclusive. We found that less segregated communities are not only more inclusive, they’re more prosperous.

Armed with our findings, Chicago decisionmakers pushed to support affordable housing in high-income areas and lift the barriers that separate residents and hold back the city’s potential. This project prompted leaders in other cities to reach out to Urban for advice and use our approach to estimate the costs of segregation in their own communities.

FINDING

If Chicago reduced its black-white racial segregation to the median of the country’s 100 most-populous regions, incomes for black residents would rise by an average of $2,455 per person—or a total of $3.6 billion. And the homicide rate would be 30 percent lower.
Identifying housing solutions in Miami

Our neighborhood-level data and analysis and our tailored recommendations helped Miami leaders tackle the city’s housing affordability crisis.

Funder: JPMorgan Chase & Co.

Miami and Miami-Dade County’s rapidly growing populations have driven up housing costs, particularly for low- and middle-income households that make too much to qualify for subsidies and too little to afford market rents. Based on our research, we recommended to city influencers short-term policy interventions in gentrifying neighborhoods and longer-term solutions to engage the community and build the capacity of community-based organizations and local entrepreneurs. Urban’s insights and the partnerships we facilitated helped spur Miami’s developers, agencies, and the business sector to create a strategic plan to address the city’s housing affordability crisis—and mobilize support for the effort. Our engagement contributed to the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce adopting affordable housing as a top priority and to local leaders advocating a $100 million bond for affordable housing that voters endorsed in November 2017.

HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

Place matters. For nearly 50 years, Urban’s research and insights have informed policymakers and practitioners who are working to strengthen communities and break down barriers to affordable housing and quality neighborhoods. Our commitment to fair housing can be traced to our work that pioneered the practice of paired testing, a powerful research tool that can capture housing discrimination in action. Since the 1980s, we have systematically measured housing discrimination against people of color, LGBT people, families, and people with disabilities. This expertise continues to support and strengthen our research capacity.
As part of our body of work analyzing mass incarceration, in 2017 we shone a light on the hidden story of how long prison terms fuel mass incarceration and keep states from achieving real reform. Using a new approach to measuring time served, Urban researchers found that people are spending more years in prison and that the longest prison terms are getting longer.

Alongside the research findings in our online feature "A Matter of Time: The Causes and Consequences of Rising Time Served," quotes and audio clips from people who had served long prison terms drove home the personal costs of long-term incarceration.

Through data visualization, multimedia, and storytelling, we blended research and analysis with lived experience. "A Matter of Time" also illustrated how we amplify the voices, experiences, and perspectives of the people and communities most affected by social and economic policies by including them in how we design, implement, and interpret our research.

Deliberate policy changes got us here, and policy changes can help get us out. Informed by interviews with practitioners, advocates, scholars, survivors of violent crime, and people who had been in prison, we laid out a path to reform committed to public safety, justice, and rehabilitation and grounded in the difficult truth that focusing solely on nonviolent offenses isn’t enough.

Media results point to the feature’s wide reach, with stories in the right-leaning Daily Caller, criminal justice outlets The Crime Report and The Marshall Project, and African American culture–focused The Root, as well as Vox, Newsweek, and Fast Company. Criminal justice organizations such as Solitary Watch, the Prison Policy Initiative, the Justice Policy Institute, FWD.us, and the Correctional Association of New York supported and amplified our findings through social media.

Funder: Open Society Foundations

Driving police reform in Austin

Austin, Texas, postponed the renewal of its contract with the police union in 2017 in part after seeing data from a survey of residents on their perceptions of local police. Urban designed the Austin survey in partnership with advocates, local law enforcement, and residents who experience intensive policing and high rates of crime. As a result, policy recommendations developed by residents and police officers for improving public safety and building trust are now informing contract renegotiations.

Austin’s goal: to integrate more police accountability and transparency measures into the revised agreement.
ADVANCING DEMOCRACY

Urban’s research and insights help policymakers, journalists, and voters understand the consequences of changing legislation.
Elevating the tax debate

In 2017, the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center employed innovative microsimulation models to produce timely analyses of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.


During the tax debate in the fall of 2017, we modeled and analyzed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) and the many proposals that preceded it, clarifying the effects of various approaches to tax reform. Reporters, members of Congress, and legislative staff frequently consulted with our experts to better grasp the size and scope of potential changes, to compare House and Senate proposals, and to understand that bill’s effect on the federal deficit and economic growth.

Beyond congressional briefings, our work helped the public understand the TCJA’s consequences for themselves and their families. We released case studies that showed what the law would mean for different households, and our online calculator tool allowed users to see how the new legislation would affect their taxes in 2018. When the TCJA passed, we applied our expertise to questions from states and how their responses to the new law would affect their residents.

FINDING

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act is estimated to boost the GDP 0.8 percent in 2018 but will have little effect on economic growth in 2027 or 2037, according to Tax Policy Center analysis.
HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

For more than 15 years, the Tax Policy Center has been the go-to source for objective analysis about tax policy, notably during election season. Our analysis of presidential candidates’ tax plans—achieved through sophisticated microsimulation (and now macrosimulation) modeling—shows who would pay more and who would pay less and what effect new policies will have on tax revenues and economic growth. Tax policy has far-reaching effects on the economy, health care, retirement security, and the well-being of families. Our work gives the electorate vital tools to make informed decisions about policy that touches so many areas of their lives.
Urban enhanced our data and research technology capabilities in 2017, allowing our experts to analyze larger datasets, predict policy outcomes at the state level, and deliver more robust, interactive web applications that put data directly in the hands of users. Urban’s calculators, data tools, maps, and dashboards help people make sense of complex policy choices, allowing them to localize information and figure out how communities or constituents are affected by an issue or a program. They also allow our experts to manipulate and visualize data, spotting trends and patterns that otherwise might be hard to find. Our technology and data science teams have also developed innovative new processes in partnership with Urban researchers, public and private organizations, policymakers, and others to advance decisionmaking grounded in evidence.

**Bringing modeling to the cloud**

Urban built an architecture in the cloud that allows us to run large, dynamic data simulations faster and with more complexity. This new approach gives researchers the ability to operate thousands of models using multiple scenarios. Not only do the researchers get faster results, but they can also spot patterns or correlations that might generate new insights. Urban continues to look ahead to harness new capabilities for machine learning and artificial intelligence, accelerating our ability to solve complex problems with accuracy and flexibility.

**What is data science?**

At Urban, we think of data science as the combination of traditional social science research methods with new, innovative approaches, tools, and processes developed in computer science. The insights generated from data science help provide more precise information to policymakers, identify new lines of research, and support the collection of new data to address policies that affect families and communities.

When the TCJA gained traction in the House and Senate in late 2017, Urban’s technology and Tax Policy Center teams quickly tailored the calculator to the current debate. The new Tax Proposal Calculator has had 31,295 unique views since its debut, with visitors spending an average of more than five minutes on the page.

Using our more powerful microsimulation modeling, the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center in 2017 developed the Tax Proposal Calculator to help the public easily and intuitively explore potential outcomes of proposed changes to the tax code under the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. A previous version of the calculator was developed during the 2016 election to show the differences between tax proposals presented by presidential candidates.
Urban’s work does not solely target the immediate challenges and opportunities before us. We always look beyond today, to identify future trends and investigate what they could mean for our society.

As we cast our lens to the coming decades, we are particularly cognizant of the powerful changes our nation is navigating. Advances in technology are transforming how we earn a living, learn, and interact with one another. Longer life expectancies and profound demographic shifts are remaking our family structure and social and cultural fabric. More frequent and devastating weather events stand to alter where and how we live, work, travel, and play. How will this era of transformative change affect us?

Urban experts are already exploring many aspects of this key question. As new ideas surface, we are positioning ourselves to develop fresh bodies of work in 2018 and beyond that will contribute to—and elevate—debates taking place in the halls of Congress and the meeting rooms at neighborhood community centers. And we’ll continue to stay true to our founding promise, delivering power through knowledge to dismantle barriers to opportunity and progress, so every individual and every community can thrive.

Photo by Preston Keres/USDA/Flickr.
Revenue

- Federal Government: 45.03%
- Foundations: 36.85%
- Nonprofits & Universities: 4.73%
- Corporations: 3.91%
- State & Local Governments: 1.46%
- International Organizations & Foreign Entities: 1.07%
- Individuals: 1.10%
- Publication & Other Income: 0.07%
- Urban Institute Endowment Support: 5.78%

Program Expenses

- Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy: 1.90%
- Executive Office Research: 1.99%
- Housing Finance Policy Center: 2.70%
- Health Policy Center: 22.77%
- Income and Benefits Policy Center: 13.41%
- Center on International Development and Governance: 3.08%
- Justice Policy Center: 14.43%
- Center on Labor, Human Services, and Population: 8.06%
- Metropolitan Housing and Communities Policy Center: 14.37%
- Research to Action Lab: 6.83%
- Statistical Methods Group: 0.57%
- Tax Policy Center: 9.88%
- Office of Technology and Data Science: 0.01%

2017 FINANCIALS

DEDICATED TO IMPROVING THE WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE AND PLACES

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

2017 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Our 2017 operating revenue totaled $87.4 million and operating expenses totaled $92.4 million. The following pages provide additional details about our finances and sources of funding.
Statement of Activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPERATING REVENUES</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contract amounts earned</td>
<td>35,394,372</td>
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<td>Program and project grants</td>
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<td>General support grants and contributions</td>
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<td>Publication income</td>
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<td>Investment return designated for operations</td>
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<td>Other income</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES</strong></td>
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<td>Incurred under contracts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incurred under grants</td>
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<td>Incurred for other research</td>
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<td>Total program costs</td>
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<td>Development</td>
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<td>Publication and public affairs costs</td>
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<td>Other costs</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>NONOPERATING ACTIVITIES</th>
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<td>Interest and dividends, net</td>
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<td>Change in net assets</td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS AT BEGINNING OF THE YEAR</strong></td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS AT END OF THE YEAR</strong></td>
<td><strong>158,046,241</strong></td>
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Statement of Financial Position

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<th>ASSETS</th>
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<td>Endowment-related cash and cash equivalents</td>
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<td>Long-term investments</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td>Accrued paid time off</td>
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<td>Other accrued expenses</td>
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<td>Permanently restricted</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>158,046,241</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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Our full audited financial statements are available at www.urban.org/financials.
THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS
We are grateful for your support, which helps Urban’s researchers transform evidence into solutions.

$1,000,000 AND ABOVE
Laura and John Arnold Foundation*
Annie E. Casey Foundation*
Ford Foundation*
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*
JPMorgan Chase & Co.*
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*
Peter G. Peterson Foundation*
Robert C. Pozen and the Ashurst Foundation†
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation*
Rockefeller Foundation*
Alfred P. Sloan Foundation*
US Department of Education*
US Department of Housing and Urban Development*
US Department of Justice*
US Department of Labor*

$500,000 TO $999,999
AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety*
Commonwealth of Massachusetts*
Corporation for National and Community Service*
Feeding America*
The Kresge Foundation*
Overdeck Family Foundation*
The Pew Charitable Trusts*
The Popplestone Foundation
University of Oklahoma*
US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau*
US Social Security Administration*
Walton Family Foundation*
The World Bank*

$250,000 TO $499,999
Access Group Inc.*
American Association of Retired Persons*
American Civil Liberties Union*
Bipartisan Policy Center*
Citi Foundation*
eBond Advisors*
Fidelity Charitable
Heising-Simons Foundation
The William & Flora Hewlett Foundation*
Jobs for the Future*
The Joyce Foundation*
MedPAC*
The Mississippi Community College Board*
National Academy of Sciences*
New York City Center for Economic Opportunity*
Overdeck Family Foundation*
The Pew Charitable Trusts*
The Popplestone Foundation
University of Oklahoma*

$100,000 TO $249,999
Adam and Rosalind Abram
Anonymous
Anthem Inc.
Arch Capital Group Ltd.
Black Knight Financial Services
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation Inc.*
California Health Care Foundation*
Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies
Center for Health Care Strategies*
The Chicago Community Trust*
Cities of Service
City of Denver*
City of Oakland
Armando Codina
The Commonwealth Fund*
ConAgra Foods Foundation*
Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency for the District of Columbia*
Everytown for Gun Safety*
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation*
Finance of America Reverse LLC
Fund for Shared Insight, a sponsored project of the Rockefeller Philanthropic Advisors*
Google Inc.
The Greater Washington Community Foundation*
ITHAKA*
Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation*
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation*
Lumina Foundation*
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