

# COMPTON PLEDGE FACT SHEET

## Summary of Compton guaranteed income initiative

All material included may be used by the press

## 1. COMPTON PLEDGE

### 1.1 Summary

The Compton Pledge is a landmark guaranteed income initiative designed to distribute recurring cash relief to approximately 800 low-income residents for 2 years. It marks the largest sustained city-based guaranteed income pilot in the U.S. The Compton Pledge is officially supported by the Fund for Guaranteed Income, a registered 501c3 charity, and administered by the Compton Community Development Corporation. The scale of this program allows for the significant advancement of policy research. Results can inform key, open questions about what a guaranteed income could look like at the [state and federal level](#); specifically, what amounts and frequencies of payments effectively provide urgent relief and longer-term stability. The Compton Pledge is co-designed by local and national organizations devoted to racial and economic justice. In a city where 1 of 5 residents live below the poverty line, 30% are Black, and 68% are Latino, the Pledge invests in the economic self-determination of a community disproportionately affected by the public health crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as pervasive PTSD following decades of police brutality and poverty.

### 1.2 Guiding principles

- **Prioritizing the agency of individuals:** Guaranteed income is built on the premise that providing direct cash preserves the agency of individuals by removing paternalistic conditions or requirements around the transfer. Any additional services offered would be optional and requests to track outcomes would be minimal.
- **Narrative building:** Investing in narrative-building efforts to shift public perceptions away from welfare stereotypes, which studies have proven to be unambiguously harmful as well as factually inaccurate;
- **Systems approach:** Exploring ways to integrate with—and potentially strengthen—city-level mechanisms for enrollment and disbursement to communities which are excluded from welfare programs. Enhancing the movement-building efforts, capabilities, and campaigns of community-based organizations;
- **Leading the research agenda:** Contributing to the growing body of policy-relevant research on guaranteed income.

## 2. THE CASE FOR GUARANTEED INCOME IN COMPTON

### 2.1 Facts about Compton

For Compton's 95,000 residents, 30% of whom are Black and 68% of whom are Latino, structural inequalities in welfare provision have left more than 1 in 5 living below the poverty line.

The pandemic has left a further 1 in 5 Comptonians unemployed, and many are newly underemployed or face chronically low wages. Housing assistance is at capacity with waiting lists closed.

As protests for racial justice continued throughout the summer of 2020, the Movement for Black Lives published a [national call](#) to investigate and invest in guaranteed income policies and pilots, while also pushing for federal legislation outlined in the [BREATHE Act](#), which incorporates an unconditional cash transfer. Among a slew of bold relief policies Mayor Brown has implemented over two terms in office, the Compton Pledge should be seen as Compton's local response to these calls for action.

Mayor Brown has committed to guaranteed income as an urgent tool for Compton residents' human dignity and economic justice. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, she secured an emergency cash relief program in partnership with GiveDirectly in June 2020.

### 2.2 Facts about Guaranteed Income

The positive impact of guaranteed income has been studied for decades, with [evidence](#) indicating that cash transfers are an effective anti-poverty measure with an array of welfare benefits. [Empirical evidence](#) also indicates that people keep their jobs and [spend](#) the extra money on groceries, utilities or other basic needs; those who work fewer hours largely invest that time in education, job training, or caring for children.

Between the global protests calling for the reinvestment in Black communities and the need to deliver emergency, cash-based COVID-relief, the [case](#) for guaranteed or universal basic income is at an unprecedented peak

## 3. THE TEAM

### 3.1 Leadership Team

The Compton Pledge is administered by the Compton Community Development Corporation and led by Mayor Aja Brown alongside the Fund for Guaranteed Income, the Jain Family Institute, and a Community Advisory Council of multiple organizations. Jamarah Hayner and Nika Soon-Shiong serve as Co-Directors of the Compton Pledge under Mayor Brown. The core partners are:

- **Office of Mayor Aja Brown:** Mayor Aja Brown was first elected as the youngest mayor in Compton's history in 2013. Since then, her 'New Vision for Compton' revitalization strategy has shifted Compton's trajectory, reducing unemployment, violent crime, attracted record levels of new investment - small and large businesses, grocery stores, housing, arts + culture, green development, health and wellness providers, which has garnered national recognition for her advocacy for youth, women's rights, and socio-economic advancement.
- **Fund for Guaranteed Income:** F4GI is a registered public charity launched in August 2020 to facilitate pilots in multiple cities, beginning with efforts to raise funds for and launch the Compton Pledge. F4GI seeks to create a society characterized by economic equity which grants residents their rightful share of their nation's wealth. It will act as a steward and champion for guaranteed income, with a focus on racial justice at its core.
- **Jain Family Institute (JFI):** JFI is an applied research organization that leads the field in designing and evaluating guaranteed income programs. JFI consulted on the Stockton, CA SEED pilot, the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend, the Chicago Resilient Families Task Force, and related policies in New York City, as well as a forthcoming pilot in Newark, NJ. JFI is leading an evaluation of a 42,000-person guaranteed income program in Maricá, Brazil, a keystone of the movement for a solidarity economy. JFI staff will support the Compton Pledge through research, editorial and policy expertise.
- **Compton Pledge Community Advisory Board:** Dozens of Compton organizations are formally involved in advising the design and implementation of the guaranteed income initiative. Some organizations represented on the council include: CHIRLA, One Fair Wage, My Brother's Keeper, Shields for Families, Neighborhood Housing Services, Color Compton, Sylvia Nunn Angels, Vecinos Unidos Por Compton, Compton YouthBuild, Compton Advocates, and Originals Nation.

### 3.2 Funders

So far, the Compton Pledge has met its fundraising goals to provide roughly 800 residents with cash transfers for two years, all through private donations. The Pledge will continue accepting donations, via the Fund for Guaranteed Income (F4GI), led by Nika Soon-Shiong, to support additional recipients and operational and research costs. Approximately \$8 million dollars was raised in direct funds for the recipients. The Jain Family Institute and the City of Compton have provided in-kind donations of staff capacity.

### 3.3 Research

The primary design partner for the Compton Pledge is the Jain Family Institute (JFI), a nonpartisan applied social science research group in New York City that has advised guaranteed income pilot research and design internationally, including Stockton SEED and the Maricá Basic Income Study in Brazil. JFI and the Compton Pledge are convening independent evaluators to capture the data and stories that will emerge over the next two years of cash transfers in Compton. The Compton Pledge will help researchers understand the design of optimal guaranteed income policy.

The randomization of recipients and the variation in disbursement amounts and frequencies enable the researchers to protect the anonymity of participants while assessing what parameters produce the greatest overall welfare benefits. Empirical research indicates that all participants will benefit substantially from the cash transfer, and these pilot variations will allow researchers to understand how positive impacts can be maximized. Given the size of this initiative, these results will add to the knowledge base to inform a large-scale policy in Compton and nationally.

### 3.4 Policy

The Compton Pledge has formed a dedicated, cross-institutional working group of alternative asset managers, lawyers, economists, and policy experts exploring innovative municipal financing schemes to sustain a long-term guaranteed income. The best methods for sustainable financing are the subject of much study. The team is looking to leverage the tools of community development finance and monetary policy to develop concrete proposals for a progressively funded guaranteed income policy in the Compton.

## 4. FACTS ABOUT THE COMPTON PLEDGE

### 4.1 Recipients

Residents of Compton who receive cash will be randomly chosen from the most accurate list of residential addresses in Compton, with input from the city and many community-based organizations. All low-income residents of Compton are eligible for consideration, including the undocumented, the formerly incarcerated, and those otherwise ineligible for existing welfare programs. Residents need not apply or submit any personal information to be considered.

A social security number or ITIN is not required to receive a cash payment through the Compton Pledge; residential addresses in Compton are the primary form of identifying information. In addition, by working directly with community based organizations that serve the undocumented, Compton Pledge aims to build trust in the program and ensure individuals can receive the benefit regardless of legal status.

### 4.2 Transfer amounts

The exact amounts received by each participant will vary, but each participant will receive at least several hundred dollars, with greater amounts to parents with multiple children. The frequency of distribution will also vary but participants will be informed at the outset about the timing of their expected payments so that they may plan accordingly.

### 4.3. Impact on welfare benefits

Participation in the guaranteed income initiative should not affect existing welfare benefits, nor should its payments be taxable or considered a public charge issue. To the extent possible, the Pledge will secure government waivers to ensure participants' continued access to existing benefits. Wherever a waiver does not apply, the Compton Pledge will use its 'Hold Harmless Fund' to support those who face financial losses from pilot participation.

## 4.4 Payment and benefits platform

One of the innovations of the Compton Pledge is an online payment platform that allows recipients to receive their payments in a variety of ways: through direct deposit, electronic transfers, and prepaid debit cards. The platform also provides no-cost banking and access to existing financial, legal, and counseling services. This feature will enable Compton and cities like it to both implement cash transfers and effectively connect constituents to local services, and non-predatory financial services in particular.

## 4.5 Timeline

Fundraising for the pilot has been underway since August 2020. The program began in late 2020, with recruitment continuing through March, 2021, and transfers will continue for two years. Every six months, preliminary findings will be made available as the Community Advisory Council weighs in on how to ensure the initiative best serves the community.

## 4.6 Relation to other initiatives

Mayor Aja Brown is among the founding members of the [Mayors for a Guaranteed Income \(MGI\)](#), and joins a growing list of 25 mayors advocating for guaranteed income pilots and policy. The Compton Pledge leadership and collaborators are keeping in close contact with other cities conducting pilots. Notably, the Compton Pledge is unique as the largest such initiative, for its core focus on racial justice, for its financial inclusion and payment platform, for its broad-based coalition of local and national activists, and finally, for its significant research implications.

# 5. QUOTES AND QUOTABLE MEDIA

## 5.1 Stories

While the Compton Pledge is the first dedicated cash transfer initiative in Compton, participants in GiveDirectly's emergency COVID-19 cash transfer program, [Project 100+](#), included some Compton residents; their narratives give an early look at the effects we expect to see for residents across Compton. As they emerge, Compton Pledge will actively seek impact stories from trusted community-based organizations and pilot participants, while protecting participants who wish to remain anonymous.

We aim to invest in long-standing efforts by community leaders to elevate narratives that challenge persistent racial and economic inequality. We believe stories from Compton can vitally inform the conversation about guaranteed income locally and nationally.

Karen Savage, Compton My Brother's Keeper Lead: "The Compton Pledge is an invaluable economic commitment that will help deserving recipients actualize the American Dream."

Saru Jayaraman, One Fair Wage Founder: “One Fair Wage pledges to support Compton residents because we believe that service workers deserve much more—they deserve to be lifted from poverty into livable wage jobs! We recognize that the economic system we live in was broken and we are offering Compton residents emergency cash transfers and employment opportunities in our CA Worker Cooperative. Let's build our future together.”

Patrisse Cullors, Black Lives Matter Founder ““Guaranteed income is an urgent and necessary strategy for addressing the economic realities of racial injustice. I’m thrilled Mayor Brown and Compton are leading the way in this growing national movement.”

## 5.2 Contacts

The following individuals are available to speak on or off the record about the program. To get in touch, contact [media@comptonpledge.org](mailto:media@comptonpledge.org).

- **Aja Brown, Mayor of Compton:** Mayor Aja Brown was first elected as the youngest mayor in Compton’s history in 2013. She and her team will be the driving force behind the pilot, coordinating activities, connecting with community members, and ensuring accountability.
- **Maritza Agundez, CHIRLA:** As a lawyer with a career spent in public service, Maritza is the Managing Attorney for [CHIRLA](#), the Coalition for Humane and Immigrant Rights in Los Angeles. She serves on the Compton Pledge Community Advisory Council, and has received multiple awards for her work in criminal justice and immigration
- **Dr. Sharoni Little, USC:** [Dr. Little](#) is a University of Southern California Professor of Clinical Business Communication. An award-winning teacher, researcher and mentor, Dr. Little brings to the Pledge Community Advisory Council her expertise in a variety of social and educational issues facing women and surveillance of Black men.
- **Michael Stynes, CEO, Jain Family Institute (JFI):** Michael leads the [Jain Family Institute](#), an applied research organization in the social sciences. JFI is a global leader in guaranteed income pilot and policy design, with domestic work in Compton, Stockton, Newark, and on the Alaska Permanent Fund, and international work on one of the world’s largest guaranteed income policies, in Maricá, Brazil.
- **Halah Ahmad, Public Relations and Policy Lead, Jain Family Institute (JFI):** Halah manages JFI’s policy communications, translating JFI’s research to inform federal policymakers, advocacy campaigns, legislative convenings, and media. She has worked as a policy analyst and consultant to multiple NGOs and has published analysis in various media outlets. She holds an MPP from Cambridge University.
- **Nika Soon-Shiong, Fund for Guaranteed Income (F4GI):** Nika is the Executive Director of the Fund for Guaranteed Income and board member of One Fair Wage, working to establish the case for GI in the US and beyond. Nika has built experience in research and public policy at Oxford, Stanford, and within grassroots activist movements, and is a social protection and jobs consultant for the World Bank.
- **Jamariah Hayner, Co-Director of the Compton Pledge:** Jamariah is a fifteen-year veteran of communications and community outreach in both the public and private sectors. She is involved in community-based organizations including the Los Angeles County Workforce Development Commission, the Greater Los Angeles Area African American Chamber of Commerce (co-chair), the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, the Healthy Air Alliance.