

# A JUST SOCIETY

## THE PROBLEM

We live in one of the world's wealthiest societies, yet many of our fellow Americans fail to benefit from this prosperity. The U.N. Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights aptly notes, the U.S. "is a land of stark contrasts" —

- About 40 million Americans live in poverty (around 1 in 10).
- About 18.5 million Americans live in extreme poverty.
- American citizens live "shorter and sicker lives" compared to those living in the richest democracies.<sup>1</sup>

## THE SOLUTION

Our nation can do better. Representative Ocasio-Cortez is introducing a suite of bills to improve our nation's anti-poverty interventions. This package includes the following bills.

- (1) A Just Society Recognizes & Eradicates Poverty:** The *Recognizing Poverty Act* directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Bureau of the Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, contract with the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to propose a new official poverty guideline. This guideline would account for costs related to geographic variation, health insurance, child care, and "new necessities" such as internet access. This would ensure the accuracy of our current poverty measure, which determines eligibility for much of the social safety net including — Medicaid, Food Stamps, Family Planning Services, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and the National School Lunch Program.
- (2) A Just Society Creates a Place to Prosper:** The *Place to Prosper Act* would protect low - income tenants and rein in corporate landlords by, among other things — creating an access to counsel fund for renters facing eviction, imposing a 3 percent national cap on annual rent increases, and imposing disclosure requirements on the nation's largest landlords.
- (3) A Just Society Is Merciful:** The *Mercy in Re-entry Act* ensures that notwithstanding any other provision of law, an individual may not be denied any Federal public benefit solely on the basis that the individual was convicted of a criminal offense (whether under Federal, State, tribal, or foreign law).
- (4) A Just Society Embraces Our Immigrants:** The *Embrace Act* ensures that notwithstanding any other provision of law (including title IV of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996), an individual may not be denied any Federal public benefit solely on the basis of the individual's immigration status.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22533&LangID=E>

- (5) A Just Society Uplifts Our Workers:** The *Uplift Our Workers Act* would direct the Department of Labor (DoL), in collaboration with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), to create a “worker-friendly score” – similar to LEED certification – for federal contractors. This score would consider factors including, but not limited to, paid family leave, scheduling predictability, hourly wage, and union membership. Thereafter, DoL and OMB are to provide federal agencies with recommendations on how to evaluate – and give systemized preference to – “worker-friendly” contractors as it makes contracting decisions.
- (6) A Just Society Guarantees the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of All:** This resolution would direct the Senate to give its advice and consent to the ratification of the U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. This Covenant recognizes the right to just and favorable conditions of work, the right to form trade unions, the right to adequate food, clothing, housing, and the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.