

Justice Belongs to *All of Us*



Table of Contents

02	Letter from the Board Chair
03	Letter from the President
05	Preserving Democracy
05	Defending against federal attacks
05	Taking the lead
05	Setting the record straight
07	Fighting for due process
10	Advocating for democracy and safety
12	Supporting Economic Mobility
12	Expanding housing access
15	Promoting education and workforce development
15	Demonstrating the connections between incarceration and inequality across the nation
16	Advancing Community-Led Safety
16	Supporting community safety efforts
18	Paving the way for public safety anchor institutions
18	Keeping people out of the system
19	Reducing jail populations
24	Making prisons safer
25	Financials
26	Board and Donors
36	Credits

Letter from the Board Chair

In 2025, the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) showed that progress can be made during dark times and despite fierce opposition. Not long after I began my tenure as the chair of Vera's board, government construction crews jackhammered the Black Lives Matter mural that had been painted in Washington, DC after George Floyd's murder. Its destruction forecast the attacks on racial equity, human dignity, and democracy itself that were to come.

In the long fight for justice in the United States, we see periods of progress, followed by predictable regression and backlash. During this difficult season, Vera is drawing upon 65 years of experience mitigating the harms of the criminal justice and immigration systems while driving reforms that can provide all people with a fair chance in life. This organization remains resilient, strategic, and committed. In the face of unprecedented opposition to our work and values, Vera continues to drive real progress toward building systems that are fair to all. In the following pages, you will see that people's lives are better—our society is more just and our democracy defended—because of your support for this critical work.

As the Trump administration eviscerated due process for immigrants, supercharged ICE raids, and separated families, Vera persuaded state and local leaders nationwide to provide free-of-charge legal services to people threatened with deportation, leading to investments of approximately \$320 million in immigrant legal services.

When Louisiana put forth a constitutional amendment to put more children in adult prisons, Vera worked hard to educate voters about the damage this proposal would cause to future generations. Two thirds of voters cast ballots against the proposal, preventing irreparable harm.

When the Trump administration was sending National Guard troops to patrol civilians—while simultaneously slashing \$820 million in federal grants for vital public safety programs—Vera challenged these cuts in federal court, while setting the record straight about what really works to make cities safe.

I am grateful to Vera's board, staff, and partners for their tireless efforts during this difficult year. And I am especially thankful for President Nick Turner for his innovative and courageous leadership. He will be departing in 2026 after having led Vera for almost 13 years. His tenure has been marked by an unceasing commitment to fairness, racial justice, and human dignity. And he has ensured that Vera is the high-impact organization this country so desperately needs. He leaves Vera well-positioned to continue the fight for true safety and justice for years to come.

Sincere thanks for your continued support.



Khalil Gibran Muhammad
Board Chair

Letter from the President

How does one describe 2025 for the Vera Institute of Justice? Persistently, unrelentingly unpredictable, difficult, scary—all these words leap to mind. Vera faced extraordinary challenges as the Trump administration abused federal power to attack our work, our values, and our organization directly. Yet Vera's staff, partners, and supporters have persevered—working around the clock to protect and advance our mission under unprecedented pressure. I've never been prouder of Vera's strength and commitment to justice.

In 2025, we saw our role expand from reforming our country's harmful criminal justice and immigration systems to fighting for democracy itself. Drawing on more than 60 years of experience championing justice across the country, we rose to the occasion.

In the pages that follow, you will read about Vera's work in 2025, including how we advanced efforts to:

- 1. Preserve democracy.** Without a functional democracy, systems reform is impossible. We resisted Trump administration efforts to use federal funding to control civil society, filing a lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Justice to restore critical public safety grants.
- 2. Increase economic mobility.** Poverty feeds people into the criminal justice system and traps them there. We worked to boost programs and policies that help people escape poverty and ensure that those engaged with the system have a fair chance to succeed after an arrest, conviction, or incarceration.
- 3. Promote community-led safety.** Police cannot be expected to address every unmet safety and community need.

Vera has promoted investments in mental health treatment, housing, violence prevention, and other resources that truly prevent crime.

In my time with this great organization, I have seen advancements and setbacks. I know that progress is not linear—it zigs and zags, and despite its unpredictability, pursuing equality for all is the duty of each generation.

In Spring 2026, I will pass the torch to the next president and director of Vera. Working with Vera to promote dignity, safety, and justice has been the honor of my life. I am proud to have partnered with our staff, community partners, and donors to do this work.

With your continued support, we will remain steadfast in our goal of fair and accountable justice and immigration systems and true safety for all.



Nicholas Turner
President and Director

Photo by J. David Ake/Getty Images.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Preserving Democracy

Defending against federal attacks

Since day one of President Trump's second term, he has used a barrage of executive orders and federal actions to increase his power, punish perceived enemies, and crush dissent. As a leader in a sector focused on due process, civil liberties, and democracy, Vera became a target.

In April, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) abruptly terminated roughly \$500 million in public safety grants that funded more than 200 organizations across 37 states to do life-saving work.

This included \$5 million in grants for Vera programs that

- ✓ helped make prisons safer;
- ✓ expanded diversion to community-based safety programs;
- ✓ supported crisis response programs for 911 calls related to behavioral health emergencies; and
- ✓ aided Deaf survivors of crime and trafficking.

Shortly after this funding cut, Vera received an email from the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) seeking to install a team at the organization. While the demand was rescinded once DOGE understood that Vera had lost federal funding, the threat was clear, and the effect was chilling.

But Vera is fighting back.

Taking the lead

In May, Vera led a challenge to these illegal and arbitrary public safety grant funding terminations in a class action lawsuit filed by Democracy Forward and Perry Law alongside our partners from the Center for Children and Youth Justice, Health Resources in Action, FORCE Detroit, and Stop AAPI Hate. If the suit is successful, it will result in the restoration of critical funding for hundreds of other organizations as they work to reduce violence, protect survivors of crime, and keep countless people in communities across the United States safe.

Setting the record straight

The Trump administration has spread false information about crime and immigration to justify its attacks on due process and civil liberties. Throughout this year, Vera has served as a voice of truth, setting the record straight and helping people make sense of the chaos. We continue to publish findings and analysis to help change the narrative based on our evidence-based, nonpartisan research.

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) Funding Cuts Overview:

\$500M

in public safety grants terminated

200

organizations impacted

37

states affected

The Trump administration has spread false information about crime and immigration to justify its attacks on due process and civil liberties.

News and Stories

Crime Is Down in 2025. Trump Doesn't Deserve Credit.

June 2025

We must remain clear about what actually works to drive down crime and make communities safe—and it's not mass incarceration or deportation.

News and Stories

Three Ways Trump's Big Beautiful Bill Will Undermine Public Safety

July 2025

Evidence shows that meeting people's fundamental needs makes communities safer, yet the reconciliation bill could cause an estimated 11.8 million people to lose essential benefits linked to crime reduction and safer communities.

News and Stories

ICE is Denying People Bond to Keep Them Locked Up

August 2025

Although Trump states that his mass detention and deportation agenda promotes public safety, the opposite is true.

News and Stories

Sending in the National Guard Won't Make Our Cities Safer

September 2025

An intimidating, militarized police presence may temporarily suppress crime by scaring people enough that they stay indoors, but it doesn't make neighborhoods safer and comes with the risk of undermining civil liberties.

“Universal representation—guaranteeing the right to legal counsel in immigration court— isn't just a nice idea, it's essential. It's the difference between staying with your family or being deported. Between safety and danger. Between justice and chaos. . . . I was lucky. I got help. But no one should have to rely on luck to get a fair shot in a system this complex. Everyone deserves a lawyer. Everyone deserves a fighting chance.”

Andres*

*Name changed to protect identity.

I Grew up Undocumented. This Is What It's Really Like.

“No one should have to rely on luck to get a fair shot in a system this complex. Everyone deserves a lawyer. Everyone deserves a fighting chance.”

Fighting for due process

As the Trump administration has ramped up its inhumane detention and deportation agenda, Vera has doubled down on the fight for dignity and due process for people facing deportation.

Some of our notable successes in 2025 include:

- ✓ **Increased investment in immigrant legal services to approximately \$320 million.** Unlike in criminal court, people facing deportation in immigration court do not have a right to an attorney unless they can afford one. As a result, far too many people who could have established legal residency in the United States are deported, simply because they can't afford an attorney to help them navigate the complexities of immigration law. During the 2025 legislative season, Vera worked with state leaders nationwide to sustain, build, and grow public defender-style programs that provide free-of-charge legal services to people threatened with family separation and exile from their homes. The approximately \$320 million in investment by jurisdictions represents a substantial increase from the previous year's investment of \$250 million.
- ✓ **Expanded state investment in deportation defense to more than a dozen participating states.** Four new states invested in state-level deportation defense programs this year, bringing the total to 14. This increased investment means more people facing the terror of deportation will have an attorney to protect their rights.

In 2025, Vera increased investment in immigrant legal services to \$320 million, a substantial increase from the previous year's investment of \$250 million.

Photo by AP Photo/Eric Gay.



Advocating for democracy and safety

Vera harnesses the power of advocacy, research, communications, technical assistance, and political strategy in its work to end mass incarceration, protect immigrants' rights, restore dignity to people behind bars, and build safe and thriving communities.

Though 2025 was hard, we still made progress. Together, we impacted policies across the country.

State	Vera's role	Outcome	Impact
California Defeating harmful immigration policy proposals & increasing funding for state-funded immigration legal services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Passed \$25 million in one-time funding during special session, more than half of which is earmarked for deportation defense. ✓ Funded One CA immigration legal service program at \$90 million. ✓ Achieved a one-time \$10 million increase to the Children's Holistic Immigrant Representation Program. ✓ Defeated AB 85, which would have required local law enforcement to collaborate with federal immigration enforcement. ✓ Defeated AB 1066, which would have expanded the existing criminal carve-outs in the One CA program. 	Successful budget advocacy to increase investments in deportation defense and successful policy advocacy to defeat bills that would have unfairly criminalized immigrants and used CA resources to subject more people to immigration enforcement and detention.	Supported due process and fairness for more people in CA facing deportation and promoted united families and thriving communities by increasing investments in deportation defense. Also prevented further expansion of the anti-immigrant agenda in CA by defeating bills that would criminalize immigrants, separate families, and fuel detention.
Connecticut Ending non-safety-related traffic infractions	Vera collaborated with local leaders and other national organizations on a bill to remove several non-safety-related traffic infractions from the state code and mandated warnings for others.	The Connecticut legislature unanimously passed the bill , and the governor signed it in June 2025.	Fewer drivers will be stopped for minor infractions like dangling air fresheners or recently expired registrations, allowing officers to focus on real safety concerns and reducing racial disparities in traffic enforcement.
Louisiana Protecting kids	In early 2025, Louisiana leaders tried to amend the state constitution to allow more children to be placed in adult prisons. Vera helped lead the Liberty & Dignity Coalition's "No on 3, No on Them All" campaign, raising \$605,000 in just 60 days.	Voters resoundingly rejected this amendment , thanks to the spread of important information about the harmful effects of putting children in adult prisons.	Helped prevent children across Louisiana from being <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ put at increased risk of both physical and sexual abuse in adult facilities; ✓ denied the chance to access basic supports; and ✓ denied the opportunity to make positive changes as they grow up.

New York

Advocating for safety and justice

During the mayoral primary, Vera—along with consultants, advocates, and elected officials—briefed candidates on our comprehensive safety plan.

Vera also convened dozens of experts, former government staff, and advocates to develop city budget priorities that focus on protecting communities—and democracy.

Many of the candidates adopted our messaging, with the winning candidate most closely mirroring it.

All of Vera's budget priorities made their way into the progressive caucus's platform and nearly all made it into the final budget.

Exit polling following the primary showed that these messages [resonated with voters](#), who support a comprehensive vision of safety and justice.

Texas

Defending immigrants

Vera was part of a coalition to fight two bills:

- ✓ [HB1554/SB1005](#), which would have prohibited public funding for immigrant legal defense.
- ✓ [SJR1/HJR 16](#), which would have amended the state constitution to categorically deny bail to broad categories of immigrants.

Both bills were defeated.

Texas municipalities can continue to provide critical public funding for deportation defense services to help defend Texans at risk of deportation. Immigrants accused of crimes will not be unfairly prevented from awaiting trial in their community with their families, instead of behind bars.

“Unfortunately, in our penal system, there isn’t much rehabilitation.

You’re going to take some of our best and brightest that just need a little love here and there, and need some full investment, and now put them into this penal system that I have not seen do anything good.”

Kevin Griffin-Clark

Community organizer and member of Step Up Louisiana

[Louisiana Lawmakers Are Laying the Groundwork to Lock Up More Children in Adult Jails and Prisons](#)

Supporting Economic Mobility

Not only does poverty correlate with higher incarceration rates, but the criminal justice system has a profound and persistent impact on the economic well-being of millions of people, trapping families and children in poverty. Vera serves as a national leader to break this cycle.

Expanding housing access

Everyone deserves a place to call home. But for many people returning from jail or prison, a past conviction slams the door shut. Vera has worked for more than 12 years to remove barriers to housing for people with conviction histories. Our goal is to help people return home and rebuild their lives without being locked out of opportunity, which in turn makes our communities safer.

This year, Vera:

- ✓ Introduced legislation in [Maryland](#), [Minnesota](#), and [Oklahoma](#). Vera introduced bills to limit the discrimination formerly incarcerated people face when trying to secure housing.
- ✓ Made housing accessible to more than one million formerly incarcerated people in [Maryland](#). Vera partnered with the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to change its tenant screening policies to make DHCD-funded housing more accessible for Marylanders with conviction histories. In December 2024, the new policy went into effect.
- ✓ Spread the word about the positive benefits of expanded housing. Vera published *Fair Chance Housing: Lessons in Implementation*, a report that documents how policies intended to increase housing access for people with conviction histories are positively impacting communities.

In 2025, Vera introduced legislation in [Maryland](#), [Minnesota](#), and [Oklahoma](#).



The criminal justice system has a profound and persistent impact on the economic well-being of millions of people, trapping families and children in poverty.

“I can’t give up. So many people are dependent on me.”

Donna Robinson

Legal reform advocate and grandmother whose daughter is incarcerated in Upstate New York

People in Jail and Prison Are Erased from Unemployment Data. It’s Distorting Economic Reality.

Photo by Caroline Gutman for The Washington Post via Getty Images.



Almost

18,000

Second Chance Pell students earned credentials from 2016 to 2023.

More than

45,000

students participated in postsecondary education funded through Second Chance Pell between 2016 and 2023.

More than

760,000

people in prison became eligible for Pell Grants when access was reinstated in 2023.

People who complete a postsecondary education program while incarcerated can anticipate a nearly

10%

increase in employment rates upon returning home, compared to those who do not complete such programs.

Promoting education and workforce development

Higher education in prison transforms lives. It improves the quality of life behind bars, expands opportunities after release, and delivers widespread benefits, including a lower likelihood that people will be rearrested, safer communities, and savings for jurisdictions. For the past 13 years, Vera has worked to expand access to high-quality postsecondary education in prison.

This year, Vera:

- ✓ Published tools to help colleges build equitable college-in-prison programs. Vera published the [first-ever assessment tools](#) in the field to help colleges and corrections agencies ensure their policies and practices advance equity in postsecondary prison education.
- ✓ Increased the quality of higher education in prison. Vera concluded the fourth and final [Corrections Education Leadership Academy](#), a first-of-its-kind leadership program designed to elevate quality and equity among college-in-prison practitioners.
- ✓ Released a national report on barriers to employment for people leaving prison. Vera released [The Labor Market for People with Conviction Histories: An Examination of Access to Good Jobs](#), a national report noting that more than 1,000 people are released from prison every day and face significant legal and regulatory barriers to employment. The report defines “good jobs” as those in demand, paying a living wage, and requiring some postsecondary education and urges colleges and corrections agencies to align credentials and advising with real labor market opportunities.

Demonstrating the connections between incarceration and inequality across the nation

This year, Vera developed and released a unique national [dataset](#) that tracks incarceration and economic impacts over time for every county in the country, with a particular focus on disparate impacts by race.

The dataset provides information for researchers, advocates, and policymakers, and shows the following:

- ✓ [Mass incarceration’s links to poverty and race](#): the connections among mass incarceration, poverty, and racial disparities in counties across the country.
- ✓ [The twin “epidemics” of incarceration and poverty in rural America](#): how large swaths of the country are experiencing increasing rates of incarceration and declining economic opportunities.
- ✓ [A distorted view of economic inequality](#): how the exclusion of people who are incarcerated from employment statistics distorts our view of economic inequality by underrepresenting the number of BIPOC people who are out of work.
- ✓ [Incarceration as a driver of gender inequality](#): how incarceration economically impacts mothers who share children with incarcerated fathers.

“It’s horrifying waking up each day, not knowing if you’re going to have a place to live. . . .

[I]t’s unnecessary and it’s unfair and it’s inhumane . . . because if anybody needs anything, they need housing. . . . [I]f you want people to rehabilitate themselves to be successful in society, then you have to give people the tools that they need to be successful and productive.”

Cook County resident

[Fair Chance Housing: Lessons in Implementation](#)

“[I]f you want people to rehabilitate themselves to be successful in society, then you have to give people the tools that they need to be successful and productive.”

Advancing Community-Led Safety

Advocates in communities that have been most impacted by incarceration have long highlighted its harms and limitations. These stakeholders have indispensable knowledge about the needs and resources of marginalized residents. Vera works closely with community leaders to find solutions that allow more people to thrive. This year, Vera partnered with community leaders in cities and states around the country to ensure that communities use their limited resources to fund programs that truly keep people safe.

Supporting community safety efforts

Traditional first responders like police cannot be expected to address every unmet safety and community need. Alternative community-based public safety solutions provide mental health treatment, housing, violence prevention programs, and other resources proven to prevent and respond to crime.

This year, Vera:

- ✓ Secured funding for community-identified priorities. In New Orleans, Vera helped secure \$38 million in FY 2025 New Orleans city funding for resources to improve people's quality of life and support safe, thriving neighborhoods. Priorities were based on the Big Easy Budget Coalition (BEBC) Survey, which Vera conducted and analyzed. Vera presented the findings of this survey to the New Orleans City Council for the first time, shaping policy dialogue on community-based safety solutions.

Funding for community-identified public safety investments included:

- \$5.3 million to establish an Office of Violence Prevention and expand community violence intervention (CVI) programs;
- \$17 million for affordable housing;
- \$10 million for homelessness outreach and services; and
- \$20 million additional investment in education informed by BEBC's community survey results.

- ✓ Launched [Mapping the Progress of Policies to Limit Non-Safety-Related Traffic Stops](#). This interactive tool tracks policies and legislation that limit non-safety-related traffic stops. A [Vera Action survey](#) from March 2025 found that most U.S. voters support ending these stops.

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to establish an office of Violence Prevention

\$17M

for affordable housing

\$10M

for homeless outreach and services

\$20M

additional investment in education

Traditional first responders like police cannot be expected to address every unmet safety and community need.

Photo by Fotostorm/iStock.



Paving the way for public safety anchor institutions

Instead of using arrests and incarceration as a one-size-fits-all public safety tool, public safety anchor institutions coordinate and manage the many components of a city’s comprehensive public safety plan. These institutions house and invest in a range of additional resources—like crisis response services, counseling, peer support, violence interruption, and others—to bring what’s needed to people and neighborhoods in crisis.

In 2025, Vera helped broaden the public safety toolbox by:

- ✓ **Building a blueprint.** Vera convened six jurisdictions from across the country to jointly develop a blueprint for what [public safety anchor institutions](#) can look like and is providing technical assistance to three of these jurisdictions—Albuquerque, New Mexico; Durham, North Carolina; and Richmond, California—as they develop or expand their public safety anchor institutions.
- ✓ **Working with the [New Jersey Violence Intervention and Prevention Coalition \(NJVIP\)](#) on alternative response policy change.** NJVIP is a statewide coalition that focuses both on CVI and alternative response programs and was the driving force behind the 2024 Seabrooks-Washington Community-Led Crisis Response Act, which funds a pilot for community-based alternative response. Vera is providing the coalition with subject matter expertise to guide implementation.
- ✓ **Launching a [public dashboard](#) for the New Orleans Mobile Crisis Intervention Unit (MCIU).** The New Orleans MCIU is a 911-dispatched emergency response program designed to provide caring, effective, and innovative non-police responses for behavioral health crises. The dashboard promotes community education and transparency around the program and enables data-informed decision making by MCIU leaders.

Keeping people out of the system

Bail reform

In Texas, Vera helped block a constitutional amendment that [proposed mandatory bail denial](#) for any person accused of any felony who fell under the overly broad definition of “not lawfully present in this country,” as well as another harmful amendment expanding [pretrial detention](#). One amendment that did pass slightly expanded the charges eligible for denial of bail, but Vera helped [secure provisions](#) that would require defense counsel at bail denial hearings.

Mental health and substance use treatment

In Vermont, Vera supported a [contingency management substance use diversion program](#). The program uses evidence-based research around incentives to aid people with substance use disorders, many of whom have had numerous interactions with police and multiple criminal cases. The program’s results have helped to build support for statewide funding for contingency management-based diversion programs.

“I am thrilled that we are investing in a responsive and compassionate team of crisis responders to meet the needs of people in some of their most vulnerable moments. This is a service our community deserves.”

Dr. Jennifer Avegno

Director, New Orleans Health Department

“It was the first chance I had ever been given. I always go to jail. I am so grateful.”

Diversion programs

[Diversion programs](#) connect people facing criminal charges to resources that help them avoid future contact with the criminal justice system. This limits the collateral consequences of traditional prosecution, which is associated with an increased likelihood that someone will be rearrested and other harmful individual, family, and community impacts on housing, employment, civic participation, and more. Vera launched partnerships in seven jurisdictions across six states—Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Virginia—to build community-based diversion programs. This work helps expand access to these programs, limiting barriers that disproportionately exclude communities of color and people with limited means. Through these partnerships, Vera helps community-based diversion providers collect and analyze their data to demonstrate how diversion programs can promote safety more effectively than incarceration.

Reducing jail populations

Communities can deliver public safety and justice without relying on county jails as a first response to every social challenge. Vera works to reduce jail populations and promote alternatives that keep people safe, healthy, and connected to their communities.

In 2025, Vera helped counties move toward reducing their jail populations by:

- ✓ **Advocating to decriminalize cannabis.** The city council in Reading, Pennsylvania, passed a municipal motion to decriminalize cannabis—a direct response to Vera’s recommendations in [Wasted Resources: The True Cost of Jail Detention in Berks and a Vision for Public Safety](#), a report published in May 2025. Community partner Building Justice in Berks used our talking points to deliver comments on the record in support of the ordinance.
- ✓ **Increasing transparency and accountability in courtroom proceedings.** In Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, Vera, alongside community partner [Reuniting Families Bail Fund](#), worked with a group of observers to document the proceedings of hundreds of pretrial release and bail decisions during initial arraignments in 2025. A forthcoming report will recommend improvements in policy and practice to reduce jail detention and serve as an example of how counties can use court watching to understand pretrial practices and monitor reforms.

Of every \$100 of its general fund, Berks County spends...

\$22

on jail operations

vs.

<\$0.01

on the [Council on Chemical Abuse](#), a nonprofit that promotes addiction treatment in Berks through education and campaigns.

“Getting into this diversion program helped me so much. It was the first chance I had ever been given. I always go to jail. I am so grateful.”

Incentives for Success

Diversion program participant

Building a Blueprint

Instead of using arrests and incarceration as a one-size-fits-all public safety tool, public safety anchor institutions coordinate and manage the many components of a city's comprehensive public safety plan.

In 2025, Vera convened six jurisdictions from across the country to jointly develop a blueprint for what public safety anchor institutions can look like.



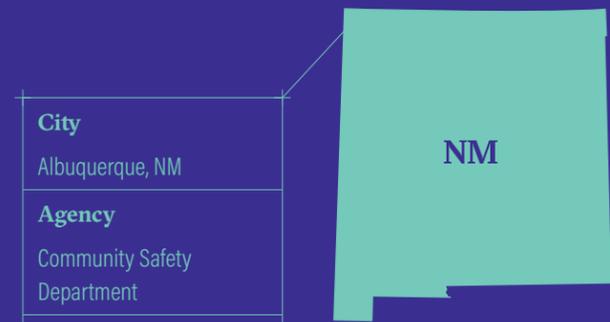
City	Durham, NC
Agency	Community Safety Department
Year Est.	2022



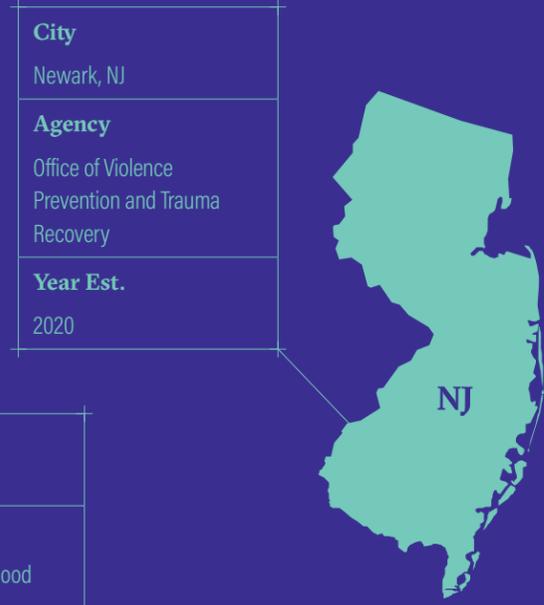
City	Richmond, CA
Agency	Office of Neighborhood Safety
Year Est.	2007



City	New Orleans, LA
Agency	Health Department
Year Est.	2022



City	Albuquerque, NM
Agency	Community Safety Department
Year Est.	2020



City	Newark, NJ
Agency	Office of Violence Prevention and Trauma Recovery
Year Est.	2020



City	Saint Paul, MN
Agency	Office of Neighborhood Safety
Year Est.	2022

Photo by AP Photo/Sean Rayford.

SCDC



Making prisons safer

As the Trump administration cut federal grants aimed at improving prison safety, Vera continued to fight for human dignity in prisons by expanding Restoring Promise’s approach to prison culture change to include statewide reform efforts. Proven to significantly reduce violence, Restoring Promise’s young adult housing units are sustained by Vera-trained corrections professionals and mentors—incarcerated people more than 25 years old serving long, often life, sentences who live in the unit with and guide the young adults.

Young adults living in these housing units have a structured and meaningful daily schedule, experience cultural healing and restorative practices, are connected to mentors who guide them in developing leadership skills, have improved connections to family and community, and have access to participant-designed and facilitated specialized programs and activities.

Lessons learned from Restoring Promise’s success with young adult housing units have been scaled to shift policies, practices, and training across entire statewide corrections agencies. The Restoring Promise initiative strives to transform prison culture into a culture of accountability, healing, and learning.

Early this year, the Trump administration pulled a \$1.5 million award from Vera intended to transform prison cultures, climates, and spaces in three states over three years. Despite this funding gap, Massachusetts was convinced that Restoring Promise was the path forward for the state. Together, the state and Vera doubled down on their commitment to pilot the nation’s first effort at wholesale prison culture change. The pilot infuses human dignity into the policies, practices, and resource allocations of the entire system—and will improve the lives of 5,873 incarcerated people and 2,568 corrections staff members throughout the state.

Massachusetts was not alone in seeing the value in Vera’s Restoring Promise model. This year, Restoring Promise celebrated the launch of new units in Idaho and North Dakota—the state’s second—demonstrating the nationwide appeal of transforming prison culture.

“A lot of people don’t think that, when people come to prison, that they change. People do try to change. There are people who learn from their mistakes and try to do better. They are remorseful, and they want to give back.”

Antonio Stridiron

UNITY Village mentor and co-host of “Chainz 2 Changed,” a podcast recorded at the North Dakota State Penitentiary

On Air from a Maximum-Security Prison

“There are people who learn from their mistakes and try to do better. They are remorseful, and they want to give back.”

Financials

Revenues by Type

Federal	\$1,405,537.00
State & City	\$222,910.00
Foundation	\$16,040,034.00
Contribution	\$12,185,524.49
Individual & Others	\$5,767,703.51
Total	\$35,621,709.00

Pass-Thru Funding	\$519,182.00
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Expenses

Program Services	\$36,716,382.00
Management and General	\$9,620,836.00
Fundraising	\$3,379,384.00
Total Expenses	49,716,602.00

Board and Donors

Trustees as of January 2026

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Nelson Fitts	Bari Mattes	Lola Velazquez-Aquilu
Evan C. Guillemin, Treasurer	Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Chair	Desiré Vincent Levy
Sean Hecker	Danya Perry	

We are honored to acknowledge and thank the following nongovernmental donors who contributed \$500 or more to Vera in fiscal year 2025 (July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025). We also thank all other contributors who support Vera’s work.

Supporters

A	Kathie Arnold	Nina Beattie and Michael Eberstadt
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Amazon	BankUnited	Leslie Blum
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	Peter Baumbusch	Paul Brill and Alicia Stivala
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Amy A. Brodigan
Benjamin Brown
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Sandra Buchanan
Richard Buery and Deborah Archer
Thomas Buffaloe
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The California Endowment
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