



PRESS RELEASE

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Policy Matters releases “menu” of options for effectively spending influx of federal funds State and local officials can increase opportunity and expand prosperity by prioritizing those most harmed by COVID

Thanks to bold action from the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and recession, communities across Ohio are receiving an influx of federal dollars. Local officials are making plans right now about how to spend them. Today, the research institute [Policy Matters Ohio is releasing a new project, “Funding our Future.”](#) to help advocates, activists, residents and policymakers understand the most effective ways to spend the dollars.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) passed by Congress last year is sending more than \$31 billion to Ohio. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also passed in 2021, is a mix of direct funding and competitive grant dollars. It could also send billions to Ohio for projects that upgrade the transportation system, build out broadband, and make communities more climate resilient.

“The bills passed last year prove that government action can make our lives better when elected leaders put policy before politics and prioritize the health and well-being of people of over the profits of wealthy corporations and special interests,” said Policy Matters Executive Director Hannah Halbert. “Now that the funds are flowing into our state, cities and counties, it’s up to our state and local officials to help all of us — no matter what we look like or how much money we have — get back on our feet so we all can emerge stronger.”

Policy Matters encourages officials to use the funds to address long-standing barriers that exclude or unfairly target people based on their gender, race, or income level. Recommendations include using ARPA funds to expand child care, promote alternatives to armed policing, expand or create school-based health centers and provide hazard pay to frontline workers. Under the infrastructure law, projects that prioritize members of underserved communities and working with unions will be more competitive for certain pots of funding. Policy Matters provides guidance for how officials can meet those criteria, including using ARPA funds to support pre-apprenticeship programs that help Black and brown workers, women, and others secure careers.

“The people of Ohio know best what our communities need,” Halbert said. “We hope our project gives Ohioans some ideas to raise with the elected officials, so we can all be a part of reimagining a stronger, safer and more prosperous Ohio.”

Policy Matters Ohio is a nonprofit, nonpartisan state policy research institute with offices in Cleveland and Columbus.