



**FY23–25
Strategic Plan**

April 2022 – March 2025

Letter from the Strategic Planning Committee

Dear Friends,

Since 1948, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Connecticut has exercised its legal expertise to protect freedom, justice, and equality. Today, our work has expanded, and we work in the courts, at the Capitol, and in communities to promote, defend, and expand civil rights and civil liberties for all in Connecticut. Our people are our power, and we are proud to have grown significantly in the past several years from the handful of staff who powered our 2013-18 strategic plan to the seventeen staff, along with our supporters, partners, interns, cooperating attorneys, and our board of directors, who will enact this April 2022-March 2025 plan.

In the past year, the ACLU of Connecticut has taken a hard look at its values and processes with an eye toward ensuring that our impact, in partnership with the communities we work alongside, is meaningful and sustainable. Our Strategic Planning Committee has worked with board and staff to clarify and articulate our organizational values, update our mission statement and enact a vision statement, and develop a roadmap that will guide our work over the next three years. We have listened to our supporters and stakeholders; evaluated the state's political landscape; considered our partners and allies in our mutual quest for a free, fair, and just Connecticut; and ensured that the organization has the appropriate resources to reach the objectives set out in this strategic plan. Most importantly, we began meaningful conversations about anti-racism within our organization and as it manifests in our external priorities; we know we must prioritize these conversations and subsequent actions to achieve our vision of an anti-racist Connecticut in which all persons are full members of a thriving state and society.

Essential to our strategic planning process was determining a set of objective criteria by which we could select our priorities. The Strategic Planning Committee incorporated feedback from the ACLU of Connecticut's 2021 membership survey and surveyed the organization's board and staff to collect perspectives on our strategic priorities. We used the following criteria:

- **maximizes impact of vision and mission, and emphasizes core values;**
- **utilizes staff resources effectively, and leverages the ACLU of Connecticut's unique capabilities;**
- **engages a wide range of audiences, and prioritizes work in service of those most directly impacted by our issue areas;**
- **produces measurable progress and results, particularly with respect to dismantling systems of oppression and eradicating systemic racism**



Though our strategic priorities are clear, we must always consider the context in which we operate. We will remain nimble and responsive to unforeseen challenges and opportunities to advance and defend equity, freedom, and justice, including in areas not specifically articulated within this plan. For example, we will continue to defend and expand people’s reproductive freedom in Connecticut, and to lift up and work alongside our partners who are dedicated to reproductive justice, especially in light of the U.S. Supreme Court’s overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. As transgender youth are under attack nationwide and here in our state, we will continue to fight to ensure LGBTQ+ rights, especially those of trans youth. Similarly, we will defend the freedoms enshrined in the First Amendment and counter threats to constitutionally protected privacy rights and increased government surveillance. Above all, we will apply the criteria described above – in partnership with people and organizations who are already involved in the work, and especially those who will be most impacted – to determine whether and how we will engage in work in and outside of our key priorities.

Connecticut can become a state that treats all people with dignity and values all of us. At the ACLU of Connecticut, we will continue to promote, defend, and expand civil rights and civil liberties in the Constitution State.

In partnership,

The Strategic Planning Committee

David Addams, Margie Adler, Téylor Davis, Rosa Browne, David McGuire, Ned Farman, Aubrie Smith, Ben Solnit



Mission Statement

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut defends, promotes, and expands the civil rights and civil liberties of all people in Connecticut through litigation, community organizing and legislative advocacy, and civic education and engagement. We are an inclusive, nonpartisan, and statewide organization within the nationwide American Civil Liberties Union network, powered by our supporters, partners, staff, interns, cooperating attorneys, and our board of directors.

Vision & Values

The ACLU of Connecticut envisions an equitable, democratic, and anti-racist Connecticut in which all persons are treated with dignity in a thriving society.

We believe in, and aspire to incorporate into our actions, the following six core values:



Anti-racism:

eliminating racism and promoting racial justice



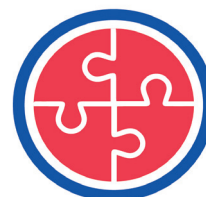
Dignity:

upholding the innate dignity of all human beings



Equity:

understanding power dynamics and creating opportunities for all to thrive



Inclusivity:

sharing and building power with historically excluded people



Diversity:

valuing the perspective of those with lived experiences different from ours



Partners in justice:

elevating the voices of directly impacted people while working in partnership with, rather than on behalf of, the communities we serve

We will use a decision-making framework for all major organizational decisions to ensure we live these organizational values.

Our values inform how we approach all aspects of our work. With this plan, we are committing to concentrating our resources and work in the areas of expanding voting rights and challenging the criminal legal system because this work is integral to dismantling systems of white supremacy and racial inequities in our state. Internally, we are committed to eradicating inequities within our policies and practices, including hiring, compensation, promotion, and budgeting. Externally, we seek to strengthen relationships with and build power for impacted communities and organizational partners, and to identify and advance shared goals together. Ultimately, enacting our vision for Connecticut will take time, planning, and a focus on systemic solutions that address the root causes of inequities. We are committed to this work over the next three years and beyond.



Criminal Legal System

Through our two criminal legal system priorities, we will address the front end – policing and prosecutors – and back end – the carceral system and its collateral consequences – of the criminal legal system. Racial equity cannot be realized within a system that disproportionately affects families and communities of color, and furthermore our criminal legal system promotes neither justice nor safety. Ultimately, we seek to end mass incarceration and eliminate racial disparities within Connecticut’s criminal legal system.

On the front end of the system, we will challenge the actors and systemic factors that cause violence to our communities by funneling people into the criminal legal system. We will work to reduce the role, scope, tactics, and power of police. We will continue to promote the reallocation of funding from policing to instead go to programs and services that advance public health and safety by creating thriving communities. We will be proactive in holding police and prosecutors accountable for their racist, harmful, and unconstitutional actions.

Expose systemic racism caused and perpetuated by gatekeepers (police, prosecutors) in the criminal legal system

Increase access to open records

Promote meaningful prosecutorial evaluation practices

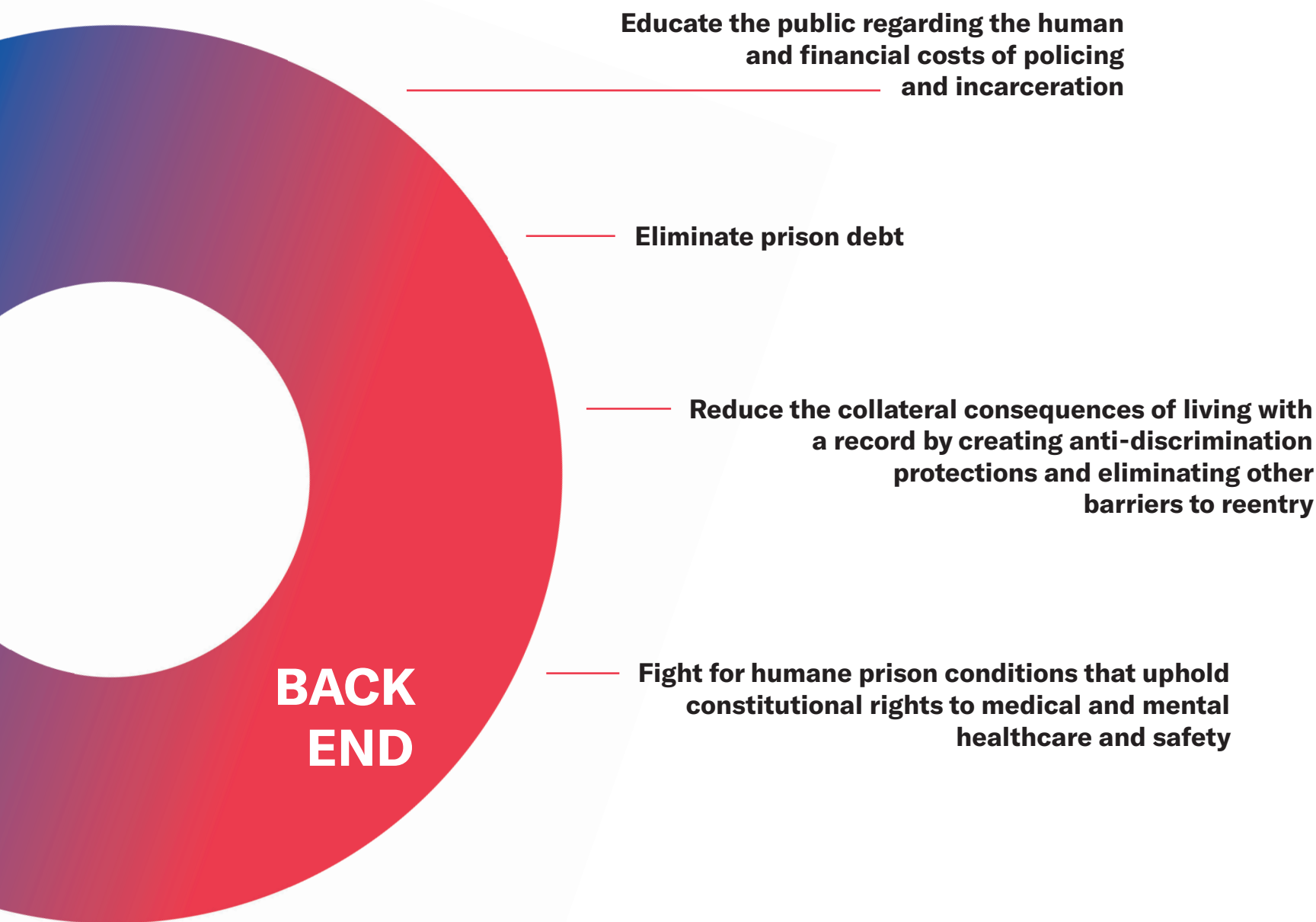
Illuminate abuse of power and create consequences for police who commit violence

Reduce the power, role, and scope of policing in Connecticut

Reallocate funds from policing to community-based programs and services

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Meanwhile, we will also challenge the back end of the criminal legal system – the actors and systemic factors that cause violence to our communities by imprisoning people in unhealthy prisons and jails and by creating lifetime collateral consequences for anyone living with a criminal record. We will work to ensure that people living with a criminal record are not discriminated against and have equitable access to housing, education, and employment. Over the next three years, the ACLU of Connecticut will address the front end and back end of the criminal legal system by engaging in and advocating for the following:



Project Flashlight



Since 2017, the ACLU of Connecticut has worked on Project Flashlight, a website publicly launched in 2022 that shines light on the ways Connecticut's more than **100** police agencies operate in secret, because information is power. The site's first phase, in early 2022, included information about police contracts (collective bargaining agreements) and police commissions. By the conclusion of this FY22-25 strategic plan, this transparency website will add two more sections: use of force, which will include easy-to-navigate data about when police use force "likely to cause serious physical injury" (a definition that exists under state law); and suits and settlements, which will provide information about police who are sued for their conduct, and the outcome of those suits. The website's four total sections of data will arm the public with information regarding the harms perpetuated by police on the front end of the system, while our work on the back end of the criminal legal system will support successful reintegration for the **95%** of incarcerated people who return to society.

Voting Rights

The ACLU has a long history of fighting for voter rights, and the ACLU of Connecticut will continue to further these efforts with an emphasis on the ways in which Black and Brown voter participation is thwarted through gerrymandering and other racist policies. We will advance racial equity through expansion of the franchise to vote and by making voting more accessible to those who have been historically underrepresented.

Specifically, over the next three years, we will:

- ✓ ensure that the right to vote is recognized as a fundamental right under Connecticut law;
- ✓ end the practice of stripping people of the right to vote when they commit certain crimes, and restore the right to vote to those who are disenfranchised while incarcerated with felony conviction;
- ✓ remove barriers to voting, including by working to establish no-excuse absentee voting and early voting;
- ✓ ensure implementation of early and no-excuse absentee voting prioritizes access for communities of color;
- ✓ educate voters about how to vote, particularly regarding new methods to vote.

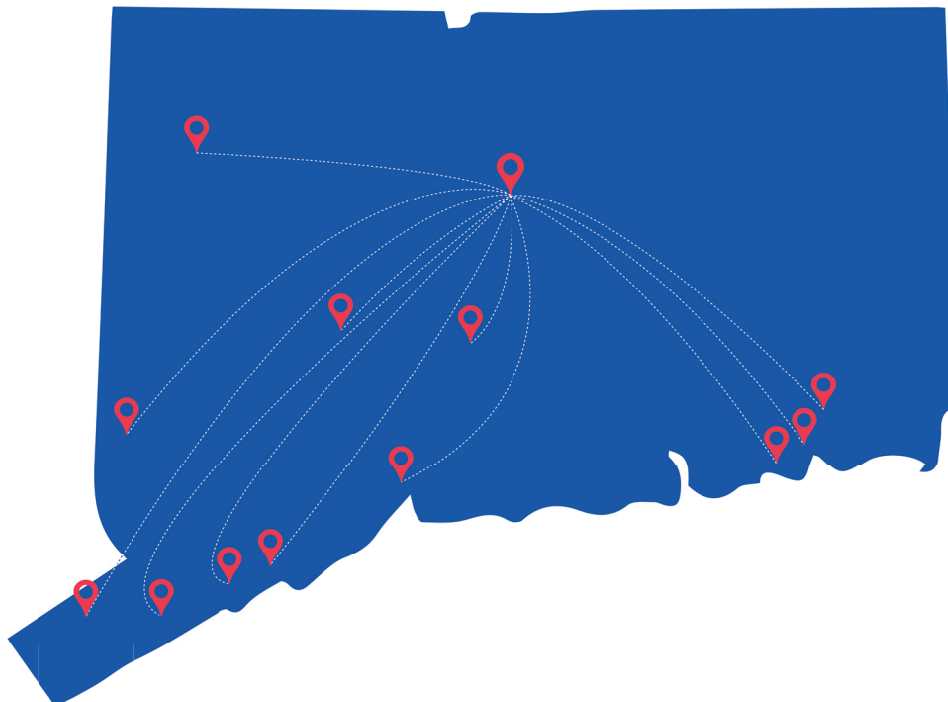


Organizational Sustainability

The ACLU of Connecticut will continue our integrated advocacy approach that capitalizes on the collective power of litigation, policy, advocacy, organizing, and public education. We will strategically invest funds to sustain our staff and increase our impact across the state, with a focus on building our supporter network and political power in Fairfield County. Our focus in the next three years will be on the organization's fiscal health, building on the strength and diversity of our board and staff, and implementing our organizational values with particular emphasis on operationalizing our commitment to anti-racism.

To ensure that the organization maintains fiscal sustainability and increases its reach while nurturing and diversifying its board and staff, over the next three years we will:

- **recruit and retain board and staff whose identities reflect the communities we work alongside;**
- **foster a culture of belonging that actively combats white supremacy within our organization;**
- **integrate organizational values into processes and partnerships;**
- **grow and diversify our supporter network to achieve meaningful statewide impact, including focusing on building capacity in Fairfield County**
- **expand college and law school chapters, especially in new regions, with an emphasis on community and technical colleges.**



Board and Staff Information

Board of Directors:

Margie Adler, Board President
Nichole Berklas, Vice President
Ned Farman, Vice President
Zafar Rashid, Treasurer
Zachary Kohl, Secretary
Aigné Goldsby, National Board Representative
David Addams, Affiliate Equity Officer
Eva Bermúdez Zimmerman
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Jeffrey Daniels
Ren Davidson
Andrew Giering
Allan Hillman
Patrick Johnson
Erik Kolstad
Tamara Lanier*
Andrew Lu
Brad Martins
Jonathon Orleans*
Bailey Owen*
Zachary Phillipps
Robert Post
Ben Solnit*

**Board service ended April 2022*

Staff:

David McGuire, *Executive Director*
Sapana Anand, *Legal Fellow*
Dan Barrett, *Legal Director*
Elana Bildner, *Senior Staff Attorney*
Laura Brownstein, *Development Director*
Claudine Constant, *Public Policy and Advocacy Director*
Anderson Curtis, *Senior Policy Organizer*
Téylor Davis, *Donor Relations Manager*
Meghan Holden, *Communications Director*
Gus Marks-Hamilton, *Campaign Manager*
Erycka Ortiz, *Field Organizer*
Rachel Sexton, *Finance and Operations Director*
Grace Sinnott, *Senior Paralegal and Project Specialist*
Aubrie Smith, *Talent and Operations Manager*
Whitney Thomas, *Digital Content Strategist*
Amber Vlangas, *Donor Relations Officer*
Jess Zaccagnino, *Policy Counsel*

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