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Lansing Financial Empowerment Center's Re-entry Program Named One of the Most Innovative in the World

(Lansing) – A new report published this week hails the work of the City of Lansing's Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) helping formerly incarcerated citizens transition back to society as one of the most innovative city initiatives in the world. The report, prepared by NYU Wagner and the Center for an Urban Future with support from the Citi Foundation, profiles fifteen of the most innovative urban policies launched by cities over the past decade, highlighting ways in which mayors and city managers from all over the world are using new approaches to address some of the biggest challenges facing society.

The report, [*Innovation and the City*](#), highlights the Lansing FEC's work in providing formerly incarcerated citizens with free financial counseling that helps them reduce their debt, open a bank account, increase savings, move out of transitional housing and reduce the chance they will re-enter the criminal justice system.

“Financial empowerment is an explicit part of our economic development strategy because the financial wherewithal of our citizens forms the foundation of our shared prosperity,” stated Mayor Bernero. “This is especially true for re-entry citizens, who clearly benefit from professional financial coaching as they transition back to society after a period of incarceration. I am incredibly proud of our financial empowerment team, led by Amber Paxton, for the tremendous work they are doing to improve the lives of people who deserve a chance to succeed. This recognition is well-deserved and confirms that we are leading the way to a better future right here in Lansing, Michigan.”

The 15 urban policy reforms were selected by researchers from NYU Wagner and the Center for an Urban Future after conducting hundreds of interviews with mayors, agency chiefs, policy experts, academics, business leaders, labor unions and philanthropic foundations.

“Dynamic and effective city policies can be found in every corner of the globe, and the impact of these programs is astounding,” said Neil Kleiman, Director of NYU Wagner Innovation Labs, who co-authored the report. “Policymakers would be wise to look to other cities for inspiration when trying to solve major societal problems.”

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“At a time when there is a growing discourse on how best to address urban problems, cities have stepped forward and developed an array of pioneering new policy solutions,” said Jonathan Bowles, Executive Director of the Center for an Urban Future. “These innovations happening in cities around the globe should be brought to the forefront as models for scalable impact.”

A map illustrating all 15 initiatives can be found here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/liljd284cnxaq0t/Innovation_Map_2016.pdf?dl=0.

About the Lansing Financial Empowerment Center

Lansing’s Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) was founded by Mayor Virg Bernero in 2013 with financial support from the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies. The FEC provides free, one-on-one financial counseling in collaboration with Cristo Rey Community Center and more than a dozen referral partners across Metro Lansing. Since 2014, the FEC has partnered with the Ingham County Parole Office of the Michigan Department of Corrections to provide financial counseling that helps formerly incarcerated citizens successfully transition back to society with a goal of reducing recidivism.

About Center for an Urban Future

The Center for an Urban Future (CUF) is a catalyst for smart and sustainable policies that reduce inequality, increase economic mobility, and grow the economy in New York City. An independent, nonpartisan policy organization, CUF uses fact-based research to elevate important and often overlooked issues onto the radar of policymakers and advance practical solutions that strengthen New York and help all New Yorkers participate in the city’s rising prosperity. <https://nycfuture.org>

About The Wagner Innovation Labs

Part of the NYU Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, the Wagner Innovation Labs are a series of initiatives that marry theory and practice to promote informed, evidence based policy decision-making in a complex world. Each Lab has its own focus and approach, and operates independently, but all reflect NYU Wagner’s broad commitment to bringing scholars, thinkers, and practitioners together, both figuratively and literally, to improve the way policy is made.

About Citi Foundation

The Citi Foundation works to promote economic progress and improve the lives of people in low-income communities around the world. We invest in efforts that increase financial inclusion, catalyze job opportunities for youth, and reimagine approaches to building economically vibrant cities. The Citi Foundation's “More than Philanthropy” approach leverages the enormous expertise of Citi and its people to fulfill our mission and drive thought leadership and innovation. For more information, visit www.citifoundation.com.

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