



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

District 2 Council Office
Atlanta City Hall
55 Trinity Ave. SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

June 16, 2020

Councilmember Amir Farokhi Launches Guaranteed Income Initiative in Old Fourth Ward

ATLANTA — City Councilmember Amir Farokhi announced today the launch of the Old Fourth Ward Economic Security Task Force, the same week as the Juneteenth holiday. The initiative brings together 28 local and national stakeholders, who, over the course of six months, will produce recommendations to address persistent wealth inequity and insecurity for the most vulnerable residents in an Atlanta neighborhood steeped in civil rights history. Specifically, the task force will look at the potential of piloting guaranteed basic income, calling for a state earned income tax credit, and the future of work for low-income Atlantans.

Farokhi, who represents the Old Fourth Ward, feels that the area is an ideal staging ground for an undertaking of this kind.

“The time for bold action to tackle wealth insecurity, especially for Black and Latinx Atlantans, is yesterday. We have tip-toed around the issue for far too long. We need to be ambitious, ask big questions, and cast hesitancy aside. The Old Fourth Ward was home to Dr. King, Jr.’s pulpit when he called for the eradication of poverty through, in part, a guaranteed income. Today, it remains a vibrant, diverse community, but one where abject poverty and affluence are cheek-to-cheek. The economic insecurity felt by so much of America, underpinned by issues of race and decades of wage stagnation, is on full display here. The coronavirus pandemic and recent demonstrations against racial injustice underscore the urgency of addressing inequality head on. I’m excited to explore big, bold solutions with residents and the task force.”

This will be the first project of its kind in a major city in the Southeast United States. Policies promoting economic security such as a guaranteed income and expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit are gaining popularity across the country. Stockton, California, Jackson, Mississippi and Newark, New Jersey are in various stages of piloting similar programs.

The Economic Security Project (ESP) is partnering with the District 2 City Council office and Georgia Budget & Policy Institute (GBPI) to fund the Task Force. Natalie Foster, who co-chairs ESP, is optimistic about what she is seeing across the country.

“Guaranteed income has deep roots in the fight for racial and economic justice. The need to meet both challenges and to recognize their interdependence has never been more urgent than now. Across the nation, we are seeing the deep inequalities in our economy laid bare by the coronavirus pandemic and its economic fallout, and we are watching as our communities take to the streets to demand racial equity. Now is the time to build a just, equitable economy that lifts up those who have been marginalized, one that creates economic resiliency for everyone,” said Foster. “We are thrilled to be partnering in this historic venture.”



The task force is comprised of individuals representing a broad spectrum of civic engagement. This includes former Mayor Shirley Franklin, Dena Kimball, Executive Director of the Kendeda Fund, and Taifa Smith Butler, President and CEO of the GBPI, who together join Farokhi as co-chairs.

Mayor Franklin feels that this is an important topic, one which holds great promise for Atlanta, and that the announcement comes at an important time.

“I find no better time to announce this task force examining racial and economic justice than the week of Juneteenth. This initiative is part of a long struggle for progress. I am honored to join Councilmember Farokhi and the task force co-chairs to explore opportunities to address the economic challenges so many families face every day. These are persistent and urgent issues in Atlanta and across the country. We must explore all the solutions at our disposal to achieve progress. It is my hope that our findings and recommendations will inform the policy work of City Council as well as Atlanta more broadly.”

Jennifer L. Owens, Senior Vice President of GBPI, is hopeful for the impact the task force could have on residents.

“GBPI is thrilled to bring our expertise to this effort. We have a long-standing commitment to addressing inequities through public policy and are excited to work with partners to attack the root causes of poverty head-on. We're hopeful this Task Force will take on bold, difficult questions and ideas to offer a transformative action plan for Atlanta and the state.”

The group will hold its first of meeting on July 8th at 12:00pm. For press inquiries, contact Hope Wollensack at Hope@EconSecurityATL.org.