



**SAFETY NET EXPANSION INITIATIVE - LOUISVILLE**

# **Policy Environment Scan**

**DECEMBER 2022**

Report By Gretchen Hunt\*



## Polaris

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Named after the North Star, an historical symbol of freedom, Polaris is leading a social justice movement to fight sex and labor trafficking at the massive scale of the problem - 25 million people worldwide robbed of the freedom to choose how they live and work. For more than a decade, Polaris has assisted thousands of victims and survivors through the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline, helped ensure countless traffickers were held accountable, and built the largest known U.S. data set on actual trafficking experiences. With the guidance of survivors, we use that data to improve the way trafficking is identified, how victims and survivors are assisted, and how communities, businesses and governments can prevent human trafficking by transforming the underlying inequities and oppressions that make it possible.

## Gretchen Hunt, J.D.

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This work was done as a private consultant prior to Gretchen Hunt's employment with Louisville Metro Government. **The views expressed here are not on behalf of the Louisville Metro Government.**



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## Executive Summary

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In 2020, Polaris, as part of its data driven social justice response to trafficking, launched its big fights initiatives. The initiatives are designed to change the conditions that make sex and labor trafficking possible in the United States. One component of the big fight, the strategic initiative to reduce sex trafficking in 25 U.S. cities, has three program focus areas: “Shift legal accountability for trafficking,” “change norms around sex buying,” and “expand social safety nets for vulnerable populations.”

The safety net expansion initiative (SNEI), a program focus of the strategic initiative on sex trafficking, is an upstream prevention program designed to prevent trafficking before it happens. The program implementation is a three phase design. In Phase 1, Polaris identifies and engages local stakeholders in four broad areas - survivor leaders, and stakeholders working in organization with the anti-trafficking movement, with vulnerable populations such as immigrants and youths, and in intersecting areas such as housing and employment. In Phase 2, Polaris convenes collective discussions on city specific vulnerable population, possible solutions to vulnerability factors, tools needed for solutions, existing assets with potentials, stakeholders to engage and priority area for Polaris support.

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*The safety net expansion initiative (SNEI), a program focus of the strategic initiative on sex trafficking, is an upstream prevention program designed to prevent trafficking before it happens.*

The Louisville stakeholders ranked ten potential focus area for Polaris - Connecting system-engaged youth to stable housing, Coordinating support access/outreach in marginalized communities, connecting organizations across sectors, education and awareness on gender-based violence and healthy relationships, childcare affordability and availability/accessibility, housing solutions for immigrant families, childcare quality, and engaging parents of troubled youths to self-development programs.

Polaris engaged Gretchen Hunt, J.D. as an independent consultant to conduct an environmental scan and policy mapping on access to housing for system-engaged/ at-risk youth. This report includes eight recommendations directly related to housing: Expedite Section 8 inspections for youth; advocate for a policy that all systems-involved youth exit care with a housing plan; enable automatic expungement of juvenile records; target affordable housing units funded by ARPA for families with at risk youth; create fund for housing for youth (18-24) through ordinance targeting hotels that rent by the hour; support a specialized shelter and/or supportive housing for youth (18-24); support changes to zoning code to increase percentage of housing that can be zoned multi-family; and support policies such as eviction moratorium, rent control and just cause eviction. It also includes four recommendations for communications - educate families & youth about lease requirements at age 18; educate landlords about expedited housing inspection; translate housing materials and increase language access on youth services website; and educate on link between housing and prevention of youth sex trafficking. It also includes a recommendation on connectedness - involve experts on cultural competency & language access in the Coalition for the Homeless.



## Introduction

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### Safety Net Expansion Initiative - Louisville

In 2020, Polaris, as part of its data driven social justice response to trafficking launched its big fights initiatives. The initiatives are designed to change the conditions that make sex and labor trafficking possible in the United States. While one fight is to “equip the global financial sector to disrupt trafficking,” the other two are to “end labor trafficking of migrant guest workers in the United States,” and to “reduce sex trafficking in 25 U.S. cities.”

The strategic initiative to reduce sex trafficking in 25 U.S. cities has three program focus areas: “Shift legal accountability for trafficking,” “change norms around sex buying,” and “expand social safety nets for vulnerable populations.

The safety net expansion initiative (SNEI) is an upstream prevention program designed to prevent trafficking before it happens. Studies have shown that some populations are disproportionately represented among sex trafficking victims - people of color, immigrants, youth and LGBTQIA2S+ community members for example<sup>1</sup>. Often these were people experiencing racism and ethnic discrimination<sup>2</sup> and their risk was impacted by several factors such as childhood experiences, family engagement and mental health<sup>3</sup>.

From 2020 to 2021, Polaris engaged local stakeholders in Louisville (See Appendix 1) to understand the most pressing opportunities for action. The group discussion identified and ranked ten potential focus areas - Connecting system-engaged youth to stable housing (6), Coordinating support access/outreach in marginalized communities (5), connecting organizations across sectors (4), education and awareness on gender-based violence (4) and healthy relationships (3), childcare affordability (3) and availability/accessibility (2), housing solutions for immigrant families (2), childcare quality (1), and engaging parents of troubled youths to self-development programs (0). The criteria for ranking was the area that would benefit the most from Polaris support and not necessarily the most pressing issue.

The policy and power mapping was focused on housing for youth and families with at-risk youth.

### The Landscape on Housing for Youth and Families with At-Risk Youth

Louisville is one of the most racially segregated cities in housing in the country. It has a larger-than-average percentage of families who live below 30% of the Average Median Income (AMI), considered to be extremely low income, and lacks adequate housing for this population. Nearly 75% of Louisville’s housing areas are zoned single family housing, resulting in a dearth of multi-family housing units that would accommodate more low income households. There are an estimated 39,000 households in Louisville who are at 30% AMI and over half of them lack affordable, stable housing. The number of affordable housing units has shrunk with the move away from public housing and into privatization and vouchers. Nearly 78% of the individuals seeking housing support are single Black mothers, concentrated mainly in a few zip codes in central and western Louisville. Structural racism, sexism and poverty intersect in the housing crisis in Louisville.

1 Dank, M., Yahner, J., Madden, K., Banuelos, I., Yu, L., Ritchie, A., Mora, M., & Conner, B. (2015). Surviving the Streets of New York. Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/42186/2000119-Surviving-the-Streets-of-New-York.pdf>

2 Vehnita, N. (1993). Prostitution: Where Racism & Sexism Intersect. Michigan Journal of Gender & Law, 81, 81-89 Retrieved from <https://repository.law.umich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1196&context=mjgl>

3 Franchino-Oslen, H. (2019). Vulnerabilities Relevant for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking: A System Review of Risk Factors. Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 1-13. Retrieved from [https://sph.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/Vulnerabilities-for-CSEC-DMST\\_Franchino-Oslen-002.pdf](https://sph.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/112/2019/02/Vulnerabilities-for-CSEC-DMST_Franchino-Oslen-002.pdf)



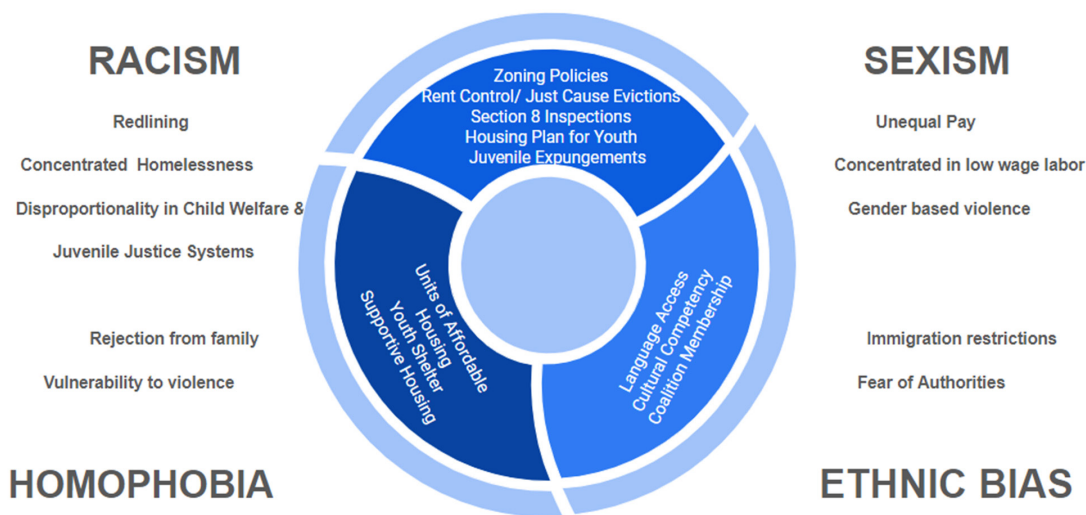
Louisville has an extensive network of housing providers and advocates working to address housing barriers in the city. **In recent years, the city has taken an active approach to end veteran homelessness, accomplishing this goal so that the population of homeless veterans is at zero. At the same time, Louisville has not taken this aggressive policy approach to ending familial homelessness.** For example, there is no current policy ensuring that any family who seeks emergency housing will be guaranteed a bed at local shelters. The Volunteers of America has rapid rehousing vouchers for families and has applied for additional transitional, supportive housing and domestic violence expansion funding for families.

To address youth homelessness, the city has sought and received a Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project grant. This grant funded transitional housing for youth at St. Vincent DePaul community organization and rapid rehousing vouchers for youth with organizations including Youth Build. The transitional housing has presented barriers to many youth who cannot qualify for permanent housing due to their inability to pay or past debt. There remains a lack of emergency housing designated or designed for youth (18-24) in the city, with only 10 beds being reserved for youth in a general population shelter. At present, Louisville has no supportive housing options for youth. Advocates also report that youth exiting the foster care and juvenile justice system are sometimes just dropped off without a permanent housing plan at a local shelter.

The eviction moratorium, eviction prevention funding, granting a right to counsel in eviction cases are measures that have helped stem some of the catastrophic harm wrought by COVID. Evictions decreased during this time. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have recently been granted to the city to build 300-400 units of affordable housing for households at 30% or below AMI.

Substantial barriers remain for youth and families with at-risk youth who are seeking housing, safety and stability in Louisville. These vulnerabilities make them more vulnerable to exploitation and sex trafficking.

Figure 1: Factors Impacting Housing for Youth and Families with At-Risk Youth



For each issue identified by local stakeholders, this report proposes a recommendation that answers the following:

- What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)
- Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)



## Recommendations - Housing

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### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1

#### Expungement of juvenile records

Make expungement of juvenile records automatic so that youth can more easily apply for housing. Ensure that homeless youth can petition to waive the requirement that two years have passed since the case closure before having the record expunged.

**Background:** Having a juvenile record may be a barrier to seeking housing. Youth who have been systems-involved (foster care and juvenile justice) may lack the independent living skills to know how to navigate court processes to petition to expunge their juvenile record. The current statute requires individuals to file a petition in court to expunge their juvenile records, subject to limitations based on the underlying offense. Individuals must wait 2 years until the completion of the juvenile case to expunge the records, the only exception being if they are applying to join the military.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Legislative change.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

State.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 2

#### Increase supply of housing

Increase supply of safe, affordable housing for youth and families with at-risk youth. Ensure that ARPA funds that are currently earmarked for 300-400 units of housing include targeted housing for youth (18-24) and families with at-risk youth (systems involved youth).

**Background:** Louisville has received nearly \$70 million of ARPA funds to build 300-400 units of affordable housing. Councilmember Jecorey Arthur has championed targeting this funding to provide housing for families at 30% of the AMI. This population is larger in Louisville than in comparative cities and is currently underserved by affordable housing options. The money will be distributed by the Louisville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (LAHTF).

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Request that the Louisville Affordable Housing Trust Fund prioritize the housing units for families with at risk youth.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

Federal funding to the city of Louisville.



### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3

#### Create more shelters or supportive housing

Create shelter (not transitional housing), supportive housing and/or host homes for youth (18-24).

**Background:** There is currently no targeted shelter for youth (18-24) in Louisville, nor is there low-barrier supportive housing targeted at this population. It will be important to establish or help fund existing initiatives, including Sweet Evening Breeze Shelter for LGBTQ youth and host homes and push for the next Homeless Youth Demonstration Project (HYDP) application to address this need.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Budget.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City.

### POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4

#### Support changes to the zoning code

Support changes to the zoning code to increase the percentage of multi-family housing.

**Background:** Currently, 75% of Louisville housing area is zoned single family, limiting multi-family affordable housing and therefore affordable housing. This can change by supporting local efforts by Planning and Design Services of Develop Louisville/Louisville Forward to update the zoning code (attend hearings, write op-eds, etc.)

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Legislative.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City and State.





## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5

### Support new rental policies

Support policies such as eviction moratorium, rent control and just cause eviction

**Background:** Long term, families and youth need more systemic changes to enable them to maintain stable housing. There is a need for Federal eviction moratorium, and amending state statutes and local ordinances to establish rent control and just cause evictions so that people cannot be evicted based on leases ending.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Legislative.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City and State.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6

### Care after exiting foster care or juvenile justice

Ensure that each youth exiting foster care or the juvenile justice system be provided with a housing plan.

**Background:** Both the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Community Based Services (DCBS) have a goal to ensure that there is a plan for youth who exit care. There is not a formal policy to ensure that there is a housing plan, nor is there clarity about when this plan should be created/implemented. Advocates suggest that sometimes youth fall through the cracks because of this policy failure.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

May need to be in the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Community Based Services (DCBS) regulations.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

State.



## POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7

### Youth housing ordinances

Create a youth housing fund (18-24) through ordinance targeting hotels that rent by the hour.

**Background:** There is not a current local funding stream targeting housing or shelter for youth (18-24). Adding language to the bill prohibiting hotels from renting rooms by the hour can create opportunities for fines that can generate funds that will go to housing for youth (18-24). (Addendum: O-034-22 “an ordinance creating new sections of chapter 121 of the louisville metro code of ordinances (“lmco”) relating to hotels, motels and similar businesses, and establishing a youth housing fund in lmco chapter 40 to receive fines collected for violations of the new sections of chapter 121 (as amended)” passed on February 17, 2022).

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Legislative.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City.

## Recommendations - Communications

### COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION 1

#### Education for decision makers and service providers

Educate policy members, relevant stakeholders, particularly social service providers, on the link between housing and prevention of youth sex trafficking.

**Background:** Advocates who work in housing know of vulnerability to trafficking, but the public and policymakers lack the understanding that access to housing can prevent sex trafficking. There is a need to educate elected officials and candidates on the connection between access to housing and prevention of youth sex trafficking, with attention to vulnerable groups (foster care youth, immigrant & LGBTQ youth).

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Operating practices.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City and State.



## COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION 2

### Dispel misinformation

Dispel misinformation about housing requirements and educate families & Youth about relevant policies on leaserRequirements at Age 18.

**Background:** There appears to be widespread misinformation among families who believe that when a youth turns 18, rent will automatically go up. In reality, there is no work requirement for public housing & rent subsidies may increase. There is a need to create awareness through social media and on LMHA website.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Operating practices.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City and State.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION 3

### Educate Landlords

Educate landlords about expedited housing inspection.

**Background:** Currently, Louisville Metro Housing Authority can process Section 8 inspections in 72 hours if the landlord's email is in their system. Only one half of the 3,000 landlords are in the system. A campaign to publicize the process for landlords on LMHA website and in the public needs to be created. As one advocate explained: "Every night a youth is on the streets, they are more vulnerable to exploitation."

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Operating practices.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City.



## COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION 4

### Translation Services

Translate housing materials and increase language access on youth services websites.

**Background:** Undocumented and immigrant/refugee youth are more isolated from available resources and face additional barriers to accessing housing. Websites and materials should be accessible to all youth. There is a need to advocate with Louisville Metro Housing Authority (LMHA) and partners on the Louisville Youth Network website to push for translation and language access. It is necessary to provide language access portal or materials on the websites of [The Louisville Youth Network](#) and [Louisville Metro Housing Authority](#).

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Make resources and website for the Louisville Youth Network targeting youth available in other languages

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City.

## COMMUNICATIONS RECOMMENDATION 5

### Involve cultural and language experts

Involve experts on cultural competency & language access in the Coalition for the Homeless.

**Background:** Housing and access for immigrant youth and families is not central in housing discussions or policy. Organizations whose core focus are immigrants need to be at the table. There is a need to add organizations like La Casita Center, Americana Community Center, Somali Community Center and similar organizations to housing coalitions.

*What is the specific policy change required? (Is it legislative, regulatory, budget, etc.?)*

Operating practice.

*Is this city, county, or state level? (Or something else?)*

City and State.



## Appendices

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### APPENDIX I: RELEVANT RESOURCES

#### Relevant Resources, policy recommendation 1: :

Coleman, A.R. (2020). [Expunging Juvenile Records: Misconceptions, Collateral Consequences, and Emerging Practices](#). Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

[Expungement of offenses and proceedings from juvenile court records](#). (Current law)

Juvenile Law Center. (2014). [A National Review of State Laws on Confidentiality, Sealing and Expungement](#)

Kentucky Youth Advocates. [Statement by Dr. Terry Brooks on SB 195 Passing Kentucky Senate](#)

McMullen, Judith G., "[Invisible Stripes: The Problem of Youth Criminal Records](#)" (2018). *Faculty Publications*. 694.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (2016). [Automatically Sealing or Expunging Juvenile Records](#).

Smith, J. (2020, December 1). [Opinion: Juvenile mistakes shouldn't stay on record forever](#). The Detroit News.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. (n.d.) [Is your criminal record causing problems with housing, employment, or other issues?](#)

#### Relevant Resources, policy recommendation 2:

Harmon, G. (2021, November 12). ['A historic investment' | \\$89 million to be dedicated to battling homelessness in Louisville](#). WHAS11  
*(Will create 300-400 more units of housing for those in need)*

Greater Louisville Project. (2020). [Housing instability in Louisville](#).

- *"We find that households making less than 30% of AMI do not have enough housing units available to them. While 39,000 households have incomes below 30% of AMI, there are only enough affordable and available units for about half of them.*
- *This creates an affordability gap for households making between 30% and 50% of AMI. While there are actually more housing units than households at this income level, many of them are occupied by households with lower incomes, making them unavailable. The same problem exists for households in the 80% AMI income group.*
- *At higher income levels, we find that households generally have access to affordable housing.*
- *Creating housing opportunities for households below 30% of AMI would help ease the housing gap not only for them, but for households in higher income groups as well."*



### Relevant Resources, policy recommendation 3:

Garcia, J. (2021, November 12). [‘We need these safe spaces’: Two facilities opening to serve Louisville LGBTQ+ community](#). WHAS 11

McLaren, M. (2021, July 6). [This plan can get Louisville homeless youth off the streets. But it needs funding first](#). Louisville Courier Journal

Sharpe, D. (2020, August 17). [The SRO Changes Name, Opens to Homeless Youth](#). St. Vincent de Paul

Kentucky Youth Advocate Report (not yet public):

*“1. Increase the number of emergency housing programs specifically for young adults (ages 18-26) and specific programming for young adults with specific needs (LGBTQ+ or parenting young adults). In the homelessness services system, youth ages 18-24 that are experiencing homelessness or housing instability are assessed for potential housing services and programs available to youth. Youth that have completed an assessment are added to an active By-Name List of all youth who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. As of June 9, 2021 there were 107 youth in Louisville that were homeless or at risk, that have completed an assessment and are waiting on a referral.<sup>8</sup> Locally, the Salvation Army has 10 dedicated beds for young adults ages 18-24 that are separate from the general population. However, 10 beds are not enough. Ensuring that there are more safe and available spaces specifically for young adults to go to when experiencing a housing emergency is a vital first step in reconnecting our young people to educational and employment opportunities. Additionally, we must ensure that programs and shelters that provide specific services for LGBTQ+ and parenting young adults are available and funded.”*

### Relevant Resources, policy recommendation 6:

From KYA Report (not yet published):

*“4. Establish and monitor policy that each young person has a housing plan at the time of exit from foster care or the juvenile justice system. Former foster youth and youth exiting the juvenile justice system have a much higher rate of experiencing homelessness in the years following their exit than their peers that were not system-involved. The National Youth in Transitions Database found, among Kentucky youth who turned 17 in foster care and completed the follow-up outcomes survey, 31 percent had experienced homelessness by age 21.*

*9. Additionally, a study that surveyed over 650 runaway and homeless youth ages 14 to 21 in 11 U.S. cities, found that over 10 percent of them reported their most recent episode of homelessness was due to being released from jail or prison.*

*10. It is important that youth transitioning out of the foster care and juvenile justice systems receive thoughtful and intentional transition planning and support. Moreover, these policies must be monitored annually by the Department for Community Based Services to ensure that youth exiting the foster care or juvenile justice systems are being provided with the housing coordination and planning they need.”*



## APPENDIX II - SNEI STAKEHOLDERS\*

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*Coalition of Kentucky*

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Regan Wann  
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- This is the list of stakeholders engaged in the initiative prior to the policy environmental scan and power mapping. We have engaged additional stakeholders who were not involved in this initial process.
- Some of these stakeholders are no longer in these positions.



### APPENDIX III - POLICY CONSULTANT

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This work was done as a private consultant prior to Gretchen Hunt's employment with Louisville Metro Government. **The views expressed here are not on behalf of the Louisville Metro Government.**

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