



WRITTEN TESTIMONY AGAINST HOUSE BILL 572  
SUBMITTED TO THE IDAHO SENATE  
STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
MARCH 11, 2024  
ON BEHALF OF THE  
AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF IDAHO

Chairman Guthrie and Members of the Committee,

The ACLU of Idaho opposes HB 572, a bill that would prohibit guaranteed income programs. No such programs currently exist in Idaho. If passed, HB 572 would strip local governments from enacting policy to meet local needs. We also know guaranteed income programs, where they do exist, are linked to increased personal financial stability and improved local economies.

Guaranteed basic income is a direct, unconditional cash payment issued by the government. Unlike universal basic income, guaranteed basic income programs have eligibility requirements; they target economically vulnerable community members. Guaranteed basic income is a type of social welfare program. Unlike tax credits for education or childcare, however, guaranteed basic income programs are less burdensome for both the government and program participants.

Economic justice is a component of social justice. The ACLU has spent decades calling attention to the relationship between economic and racial inequality. We know the constitutional guarantee of equal protection is co-dependent on economic justice. Put another way: economic policy reform is *necessary* to preserve and expand the civil rights and civil liberties of every Idahoan.

In Idaho as elsewhere, decades of discriminatory housing, education, and employment policy have created deep racial disparities in economic conditions and outcomes. Such policies, whether formal or tacit, continue to shape Idaho's housing, economic, and education trends, including:

- *Lower home ownership rates in Latinx/Hispanic communities.* Latinx Idahoans are less likely to own homes than white Idahoans
- *Racial wealth gaps.* White families average a net worth of \$188,200 – about eight times more than the typical Black family (\$24,100), and over five times that the average Latinx family (\$36,100). Such racialized wealth discrepancies reflect the ongoing impact of racial covenants, redlining, and other racist housing policy
- *Income and earnings gaps.* Median income for Latinx folks is \$15/hour, compared to \$20/hour for whites
- *Gender and racial income inequality.* Latinx women take home 57% in wages compared to white men (for every \$100 paycheck issued to a white man, a Latina earns \$57)<sup>3</sup>
- *Unaffordable housing.* On average, Idaho renters earn about \$13.30/hour - but would need to earn about \$18/hour to afford the statewide average monthly rental price<sup>4</sup>
- *Uneven economic prosperity.* Despite our state's economic growth in recent years, nearly half of Idahoans struggle to make ends meet: 12 percent of Idahoans live below the federal poverty level, and about a third are economically vulnerable<sup>5</sup>

We urge you to reject HB 572.

Respectfully,  
Amy Dundon  
ACLU of Idaho

#### Notes

1. Penn Social Policy and Practice (2023) First-of-its-kind guaranteed income program in rural area improved financial, physical, and mental well-being. <https://sp2.upenn.edu/report-first-of-its-kind-guaranteed-income-program-in-rural-area-improved-financial-physical-and-mental-well-being/>
2. US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023) Monthly Labor Review: Can stimulus checks pay for themselves? <https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2023/beyond-bls/can-stimulus-checks-pay-for-themselves.htm#:~:text=The%20crux%20of%20the%20argument,economy%20and%20spurs%20economic%20activity.>
3. Idaho Commission on Hispanic Affairs (2020) 2012 Hispanic Profile Data Book for Idaho. <https://icha.idaho.gov/docs/Hispanic%20Profile%20Data%20Book%202021%20-%20FINAL%20V3.pdf>
4. Idaho workers would have to earn about \$17.40 to afford the statewide average cost of rent (\$903/monthly). The average wage of Idaho renters is \$13.62/hour and minimum wage in

Idaho is \$7.25 an hour. Data: National Low Income Housing Coalition (2024) Out of reach:  
The high cost of housing. <https://nlihc.org/oor>

5. Economically vulnerable here means families classified as Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, or ALICE. Data and findings published in United Way (2020) Research Center: Idaho. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/ida>