

2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT

GEORGIA  
—CENTER FOR—  
OPPORTUNITY





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# PRESIDENT'S LETTER



As our state and nation emerged from the global COVID-19 pandemic, 2022 opened up unique opportunities for the Georgia Center for Opportunity

team to help our neighbors flourish through the power of work, education, and family. The need to cut down barriers to opportunity and alleviate human suffering has never been greater, and the urgency grows each year.

As you know, GCO's mission is built around the fact that true life-transformation happens at the local level—when neighborhoods and communities come together to serve those most in need. Federal and state policy is important, but it's in homes, neighborhoods, and communities where real change occurs and where genuine strides are made to create a better life.

That local change was our driving force in 2022. Here are a few examples:

We continued to help vulnerable populations find meaningful, self-supporting work. Our BETTER WORK chapters in Gwinnett County and Columbus experienced significant growth, with over 400 new participants, 95 new employer partners, and 42 new mentors. In our ongoing goal of reforming the social safety net to encourage employment, we added two states (Utah and Missouri) into the program at [BenefitsCliffs.org](https://BenefitsCliffs.org). That program now covers a total of 12 states and one-third of the U.S. population.

During the 2022 session of the Georgia General Assembly, the GCO team successfully advocated for a bill that expanded the tuition tax credit scholarship by \$20 million dollars. The result: an additional 4,000+ students now have access to this important program.

We recruited more than 500 people to participate in relationship-enrichment training, and we offered the classes in seven public schools and seven nonprofit partner agencies. University of Georgia assessments continue to show our programs improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors—all best future predictors of improved relational health.

These are a handful of our successes. In the pages of this annual report, you'll read about many more. The bottom line is that each win contributes to an enduring legacy of helping fellow Georgians live a better life through the power of work, education, and family.

While we're proud of the year's progress, we know we couldn't have done it without your support. Because of you, lives are being changed and the most vulnerable in our communities are finding help and hope. We're also excited to see what's next in 2023 as we work to make the things we often take for granted—but cherish the most—attainable for all Georgians.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Randy Hicks'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large 'R' and a long, sweeping underline.

**Randy Hicks**

President & Chief Executive Officer





## OUR VISION

We empower vibrant communities where everyone can achieve their potential.

### OUR MISSION

We remove barriers so that every person—no matter their race, past mistakes, or the circumstances of their birth—has access to a quality education, fulfilling work, and a healthy family life.

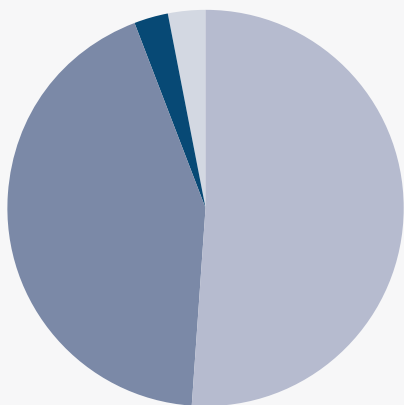
### HOW WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE

We develop and advocate for policy reforms because some laws, even though well-intentioned, limit opportunity.

We develop partnerships because addressing poverty and opportunity isn't a solo endeavor. It requires cooperation from people who can meet needs where it matters most—in neighborhoods and communities.

We develop replicable community-based programs and tools so that leaders and communities in Georgia and beyond have effective, collaborative methods of helping people move from dependency to self-sufficiency.

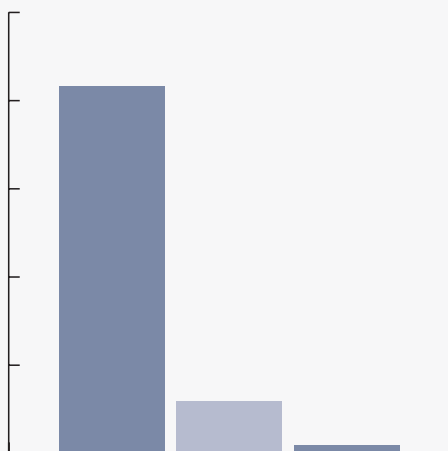
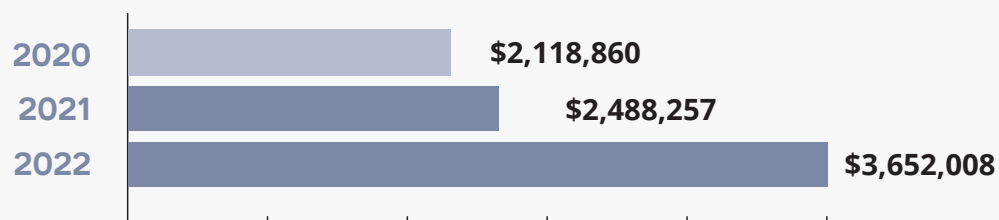
# 2022 FINANCIALS



## TOTAL REVENUE

Individuals	\$1,874,326
Foundations	\$1,571,101
Corporations	\$100,366
Other	\$106,215
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$3,652,008</b>

## Yearly Revenue Comparison



## TOTAL EXPENSES

Program	\$3,070,653
Administrative	\$206,623
Fundraising	\$41,583
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$3,318,859</b>





**Thousands of people are suffering, left helpless and broken down by a lack of options and institutional systems that create more barriers than pathways to a good life.**

As a country, we are barreling toward a tragic and dangerous reality—one where entire communities are robbed of safety, opportunity, and hope.

We know that people who get a quality education, find meaningful work, and have healthy, committed relationships have only a two percent chance of falling into poverty. But we don't have to go far from home to see that not every person has access to these things.

If we're going to change course, we must create better opportunities for education, work, and relationships in the places where lives are formed and transformed: in our local communities.

In a time when many look to government to solve these problems, GCO is reducing the need for government intervention and eliminating the traps of dependency and hopelessness that too often come with it. Our work is leading people to greater dignity, opportunity, and self-sufficiency, and communities are experiencing the restoration of families and relationships, more connections to steady jobs, and growing access to quality education for every kid.

**Let's take a look at what we achieved together in 2022.**





# FAMILY

## Strengthening Relationships to Create Thriving Communities

A lack of connected, supportive relationships is a driving factor behind cycles of despair, poverty, and risky behaviors. If we want to see communities thrive, the starting point is to strengthen relationships between couples, parents and kids, extended family, friends and neighbors, and employers and employees.

Good relationships are integral to success and fulfillment at home, at school, and at work. **We believe we can change the course for entire communities by helping people learn how to develop and keep healthy relationships.** That's why GCO works with local partners to provide free classes that teach the relationship building blocks of strong families and support networks. In 2022, we recruited more than 500 people to participate in relationship-enrichment training, and we offered our classes through

seven nonprofit partners and five schools: Summerour Middle School, Lilburn Middle School, Nesbit Elementary School, Goergia Cyber Academy, and Discovery High School. Assessments through the University of Georgia, one of our program partners, continue to show our programs improve knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors—all best predictors of improved relational health.

### OUR IMPACT IN 2022:

- 715 families supported.
- 13 workshops and trainings hosted.
- 234 attendees of in-person classes.
- 266 virtual attendees.



# ANDRE AND TAKARA'S STORY:

## How GCO's Elevate Class Revitalized Their Marriage

**After 15 years of marriage, two kids, and the launch of their own business, Andre and Takara were facing challenges in their relationship. Small frustrations had begun to add up, and soon they found themselves distant from one another.**

"We kind of lost ourselves in life and slowly began to lose our friendship," Takara remembered.

One day, while Takara was at a county office to register for car tags, she saw a flier for GCO's Elevate class. As soon as she got home, she began researching the opportunity. Andre and Takara knew they needed to do something different if they were going to rebuild their relationship. So they decided to give the Elevate class a try.

Andre and Takara went into Elevate with open minds, but they were still surprised by how transformative the experience was for their relationship. They met couples from all stages of marriage—some who had been together for 20 years and others who were newly married. All of them had similar stories. Andre and Takara were encouraged to realize they weren't alone. There were other couples out there—especially couples married longer—who just needed a little extra help to learn to reconnect.

"We learned how to look at each other again, but in a new light," said Takara. "Sometimes when you have been with someone for so long you tend to focus on all the negative attributes of the person instead of the good

qualities that brought you two together. Also, you forget to tell your spouse how much they mean to you and remind them of why you fell in love. Now we are telling each other almost two to three times a week what we appreciate about one another."

Elevate helped Andre and Takara understand how to navigate the ways relationships—and the people in them—grow and change over time. They discovered new questions to ask one another and learned how to appreciate the person their partner had become over the last 15 years. Andre and Takara graduated from the class with a stronger, happier relationship and a plan to date each other more, try new things together, and travel overseas with their kids.

***"We learned how to look at each other again, but in a new light," said Takara.***

# BETTER WORK

## Helping People Find Dignity and Purpose Through Employment

In November 2022, we conducted an analysis of Georgia's labor force and made a startling discovery: **454,100 Georgians were not in the labor force and had given up on work.** GCO's Director of Research, Erik Randolph, explained the gravity of this number best: "The reason why this matters is not strictly an economic one—we know that these individuals' giving up on work has profound social, psychological, and relational impacts that extend well beyond the pocketbook."

Meaningful work affects all facets of a person's well-being. It's also critical for shaping a prosperous, cooperative society. Yet finding and keeping a job has become one of the biggest hurdles many Americans face. There's the job search itself, and then there are the needs that hold people back from working—housing, food, transportation, education, and childcare support.

**What we need locally are better community support systems that help people find jobs and navigate the life stresses that prevent them from maintaining steady work.** That's exactly what we're building through GCO's BETTER WORK program.

BETTER WORK brings together local employers, nonprofits, and community partners to connect people to jobs, as well as to resources for the critical needs surrounding work. Through our Better Work online platform, candidates can apply to jobs with employers who are ready to interview. Employers gain access to a pool of candidates who they can more confidently hire and

retain because BETTER WORK is also helping job seekers access resources for success, including mentors, career advising, and referrals to support services for housing, food, and transportation assistance.

BETTER WORK makes employment a community effort—one that leads to greater economic opportunity by making work something people want to embrace, not give up on.

### OUR IMPACT IN 2022:

We continued to operate and grow two chapters, BETTER WORK Columbus and BETTER WORK Gwinnett. Together, these chapters served a total of 400 new candidates, 95 new employer partners, and 42 new mentors.

#### BETTER WORK Columbus

- ▶ 190 candidates connected to jobs and services
- ▶ 43 clients accepted job offers
- ▶ 16 new employer partners recruited
- ▶ 12 mentors recruited to support job candidates

#### BETTER WORK Gwinnett

- ▶ 274 candidates connected to jobs and services
- ▶ 24 clients accepted job offers
- ▶ 32 new employer partners recruited
- ▶ 10 mentors recruited to support job candidates



## EDDIE'S STORY

Moving from Homelessness to Housing and a Stable Job

**Eddie spent nearly five years on the street, homeless and working odd jobs. He earned money by raking and mowing yards, but it wasn't enough to pay for a place to live. Every night, he slept in his car.**

Then, he came to Home For Good, where he got in touch with an advocate named Ms. Terry who worked with Eddie to find affordable housing.

"The next thing I knew, she was calling me to tell me I had my own place," he said. With his housing secure, Eddie's next step was to find more permanent work.

Eddie attended a job fair hosted by BETTER WORK Columbus and met Kristin from GCO's team. She learned about Eddie's situation and, in the coming weeks, she helped him find potential jobs and navigate the questions

and paperwork involved in the application process.

With help from Kristin and BETTER WORK, Eddie was eventually connected to a job with the Marriott Hotel where he's now happily employed and thriving. Since Eddie had no formal education, Kristin and Ms. Terry helped him complete and submit his application paperwork. Along the way, he also got help obtaining the identifying documentation he needed to get hired—items such as his birth certificate, ID, and Social Security card.

"Between BETTER WORK and Home For Good, getting Eddie into housing and a steady job was a team effort," Kristin said. "He succeeded because he didn't give up."

"I had to start from the bottom," he says. "Thank God for BETTER WORK. I'm a living witness that this has helped me."



# B E N E F I T S C L I F F S

## Refocusing the Safety Net on Work

We regularly hear from employers that employees on social services are turning down pay raises. Like you, we wondered why.

It turns out that many of those on safety net services are simply responding naturally to the market created by existing policies.

**These policies are trapping people into dependency on a system that should be designed to help them.** Instead of moving people into opportunity, social services create “cliffs” where individuals and families who make over a certain amount of yearly income are automatically cut off from assistance for affordable housing, food support, or other services. While most people don’t want to depend on government assistance long-term, a higher wage often doesn’t offset the vulnerabilities created by an immediate, unexpected loss of benefits.

When a person experiences a benefits cliff, they are thrust into serious difficulties: loss of housing, going hungry, fearing that their children will be taken by Child Protective Services, and more. These hurdles are big and uncertain enough that, for many, they aren’t worth the leap of taking a higher paying job and getting abruptly disqualified from government support.

**Fixing this problem requires understanding the source of the problem in each person’s unique situation.** GCO’s online Benefits Cliffs model allows policymakers, service providers, and others to explore different scenarios and see where an individual’s earning potential will coincide with a benefits cliff. It’s the only tool of

its kind that allows users to see the impact of cliffs all the way down to the county level. With this insight, states can begin to chart out policy changes that put the opportunity and dignity of work back at the heart of the safety net system.

### OUR IMPACT IN 2022:

- ▶ Expanded our Benefits Cliff program to include Missouri and Utah.
- ▶ Presented Benefits Cliff data to national audiences, including SNAP congressional testimony, the American Legislative Exchange Council, State Policy Network, The Heritage Foundation, True Charity Summit, and the Kentucky legislature benefits cliffs joint committee.
- ▶ Launched projects in Missouri and North Carolina to advance safety net reforms.
- ▶ Recruited a congressional sponsor to introduce a bill allowing all states to integrate workforce development into their safety net programs.

*GCO’s Benefits Cliffs model is the only tool that allows policymakers, service providers, and others to see and anticipate the impact of cliffs all the way down to the county level.”*

# FRANKIE'S STORY

## How a Benefits Cliff Made a Job Offer Impossible to Take

**Frankie grew up in a middle-class neighborhood in Washington, D.C. As a teenager, she spent time serving her community and found fulfillment in working alongside others to improve their lives. Frankie had her first child at age 15, and even as she became a mother, she continued through school, finishing high school and moving to New York where she could pursue undergraduate studies and still easily trek back to Maryland to visit her daughter, who was staying with Frankie's parents.**

At 18, Frankie married a member of the military who was six years her senior. His deployments and resulting war-related trauma were difficult on the family and the couple's marriage. Despite the trouble at home, Frankie built an ambitious career, eventually becoming a high-end event planner and heading up events for women who were victims of domestic violence. Meanwhile, at home, she was living in an abusive environment herself. When this situation came to a head, she fled to Atlanta with her children, hoping to make a fresh start.

But that fresh start didn't come quickly or easily. Without a job or a place to live, Frankie was forced to seek out government assistance and transitional housing in Gwinnett County for her family.

Transitional housing in hotels and apartments can cost women \$500 or more per week, and the living conditions are unsafe and unsanitary. Worse, residents tend to get chilly receptions from their case workers when they raise concerns. During these months in

transitional housing, Frankie and her family also experienced relentless prejudice, racism, and ridicule.

While Frankie was waiting for available childcare and a pathway to affordable housing, she received a job offer—one that would have put her income above the eligibility requirements for government assistance. Suddenly, Frankie was stuck. She wanted employment, but she also needed government support in the short-term to move her family into a home she could afford.

Frankie found herself trapped on what we call the benefits cliff—the point where a person could take steps toward a more secure future but would have to endure the hardship of an immediate loss of benefits. Ultimately, Frankie couldn't sacrifice the safety and security she wanted for her kids in order to accept a job offer that didn't come with the certainty she needed.

**"It's like a loophole to keep you destitute," Frankie said.**



No person should have to choose between a better life or a benefits cliff. Our goal in 2023 and beyond is to use our Benefits Cliff model and safety net reform ideas to give states feasible ways to solve an overwhelming problem. We need to eliminate these cliffs, improve the safety net for those who truly need it, and create a system that encourages people toward economic opportunity.



# EDUCATION

## Bringing Quality Education to Every Georgia Kid

Georgia is a diverse state with a diverse set of needs for education. For many families, traditional public schools are a good fit. **But over 500,000 Georgia kids are forced to attend schools we would never want to send our own kids to—schools that have received a performance grade of D or F directly from the state.** Many more simply lack options in their designated school district and are forced to settle for an education experience that may not be the most challenging or enriching.

Research is clear that students who successfully complete high school tend to have higher lifetime earnings than their peers, better health, more involvement in their communities, decreased mortality rates, fewer criminal records, and lower teen pregnancy rates. With so much at stake, a child's zip code should not determine the quality of education.

In 2022, GCO worked to educate policymakers and parents about the incredible opportunity

Georgia has to **shape an education system that considers every child's unique situation**, gives families access to both public schools and alternatives, and puts the choice of education options directly in parents' hands.

### OUR IMPACT IN 2022:

- ▶ Passed a \$20 million increase to Georgia's Tuition Tax Credit Scholarship, giving at least 4,000 more students access to private school scholarships.
- ▶ Made significant legislative progress toward Promise Scholarship Accounts, which would give families an annual portion of state education funding to spend on the schooling option of their choice.
- ▶ Our Promise Scholarship marketing campaign resulted in 7,573 calls to lawmakers and 1,050 messages across 21 districts.



# DEKALB COUNTY'S STORY

Giving Parents an Education Option That Honors  
Unique Student Personalities

**For parents in south DeKalb, there's a promising new school on the block. DeKalb Brilliance Academy is a public, tuition-free charter school that opened its doors in August 2022. While it's currently enrolling only K-2 in 2022-2023, the school will add one grade per year until it's enrolling grades K-8.**

DeKalb Brilliance Academy was founded with a profound mission in mind: to encourage and empower students to lead. It combines social-emotional learning with a rigorous, college-prep academic curriculum. The school's founders built its programs through the lens of Entrepreneurial Project-Based Learning, which gives students the opportunity to learn from teachers and peers, as well as professionals in the workforce such as engineers, designers, lawyers, and scientists.

"It was a no-brainer for me to enroll [my son]," said one Dekalb Brilliance Academy parent. "Entrepreneurial-based learning is vitally important because not everybody follows the same path."

The academy's students learn by completing projects based on their specific areas of study, such as history, math, science, and English. For example, a fifth grade class learning about historical inventions may be asked to create a concept for an invention that solves a current societal issue. For every project, teachers partner with professionals, entrepreneurs,

and experts from the surrounding community to give students hands-on experience. These experts coach students teams throughout the year, coming alongside the students to challenge them to improve what they're creating. Students can later build on that experience, leveraging what they learn at a young age into relevant, in-demand careers.

DeKalb Brilliance Academy isn't the first state charter school to use this model—there are several Georgia charter schools that follow a similar format. For parents who want a secure, forward-thinking learning environment that honors their children's unique personalities, Dekalb Brilliance Academy and schools like it offer a well-rounded education rooted in real-world lessons.

Sadly, this type of education opportunity is not available to every kid in Georgia. Thousands remain trapped in public schools that are underperforming according to the standards of our own state. Georgia can do so much more to improve education opportunities for families, and that's why we continue to advocate for giving every Georgia kid access to quality education. An education system that empowers parents to choose and enables options like Dekalb Brilliance Academy to spread is one that sets our kids up with the very best chance to succeed at school, at work, and in life.

# GROWING BEYOND GEORGIA

*"The need to expand opportunity isn't confined to the borders of Georgia. Across the country, far too many Americans are trapped in the welfare system, out of the workforce, or caught up in the criminal justice system. These are our neighbors, and they deserve to move out of dependency, find lasting self-sufficiency, and flourish. That's why the GCO team is expanding our message of opportunity across the United States to reform the social safety net, workforce readiness, and criminal justice system."*

— Randy Hicks, GCO President and CEO

## ALLIANCE FOR OPPORTUNITY

### **10 YEARS. 3 STATES. 1 MILLION PEOPLE OUT OF POVERTY.**

- ▶ 276,600 people in Georgia
- ▶ 173,800 people in Louisiana
- ▶ 720,200 people in Texas

The Alliance for Opportunity is a collaborative initiative between the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF), the Pelican Institute for Public Policy (Pelican Institute) in Louisiana, and GCO. It is designed to promote solutions and build the political will to pursue transformative safety net reform and alleviate poverty by helping more people find work and opportunity.

According to 2020 federal Supplemental Poverty Measure numbers, Georgia has 1,383,000 residents in poverty. Louisiana has 869,000, and Texas has 3,601,000. Serious change requires an ambitious goal. The Alliance for Opportunity's mission is to reduce the number of people living in poverty by one million over the next 10 years—approximately a 20 percent decrease in each participating state.

### **ALLIANCE FOR OPPORTUNITY IMPACT IN 2022:**

- ▶ GCO and our Alliance partners launched a website for state leaders that delivers practical policy options for advancing safety net reform.
- ▶ We presented our policy recommendations and our collaborative model for poverty alleviation to a national audience at the 2022 State Policy Network Annual Meeting, a yearly gathering of state-based policy and advocacy organizations from across the country.
- ▶ We secured a legislative sponsor for forthcoming federal legislation that will make it easier for states to integrate their safety net and workforce services.

# GCO WELCOMES PUBLIC SAFETY EXPERT TO THE TEAM

Multiple studies have found that increases in violent crime discourage private sector job growth and opportunity. GCO has long understood what this trend means for communities: When families and individuals fear for their personal safety, entire neighborhoods experience intense economic, social, and relational suffering. If we want to improve opportunities and hope within communities, public safety must be a priority alongside the pillars of education, work, and healthy relationships.

That's why, in 2022, we welcomed Josh Crawford as Director of Criminal Justice Initiatives. Josh is an attorney, a former prosecutor, and a nationally recognized expert on public safety and criminal justice. In his role at GCO, he advances research and reforms that empower states and cities to reduce crime and better support former

prisoners as they re-enter society. With Josh's expertise on the team, we can address public safety needs in Georgia's most crime-ridden communities and give ex-offenders better pathways to re-entering society and the workforce.

We know that these needs are not unique to Georgia. Many states and cities are desperate to quell rising crime and improve their criminal justice policies. Thanks to Josh's multi-state expertise and relationships he has established in places like Kentucky, Florida, and even Washington, DC, GCO is already advising leaders in neighboring states and in federal government on criminal justice reform. In 2023 and beyond, GCO is well positioned to drive positive changes in Georgia and share what we're learning with other city, state, and federal leaders seeking solutions.



## Meet Josh Crawford

Director of Criminal Justice Initiatives

The freedom to walk to the corner grocery store after dark or to let your kids play outside without fear of victimization is not a universal experience in American cities. In the absence of the most basic assumptions of personal safety, it becomes very hard to encourage economic growth or upward mobility.

GCO understands this holistic nature of prosperity and a life well-lived. True prosperity isn't just about financial security. It also comes from community, family, and the ability to help one's children lead better lives than the generation before them. GCO's focus on opportunity and upward mobility for the most left-behind members of our communities very much aligns with my own passion for improving communities through public safety and criminal justice reform.

Reversing the trend of increased violence in American cities will require a combination of policy seriousness and political courage. It is my hope to bring the existing work I'm doing to GCO and expand upon it. This means focusing attention on everything from policing and sentencing to the physical environment of a city and reentry policy. The first city and state that gets these policy areas right will see huge public safety gains and become the 21st century model. And when it happens, it will be because of GCO and our work together."



# GO IN THE NEWS

## 2022 Media Highlights



Josh Crawford,  
Director of Criminal  
Justice Initiatives

### HOW TO TURN BACK THE TIDE OF VIOLENT CRIME

"More than 95% of all state inmates will be released at some point, and a 10-year follow-up of inmates released in 24 states found an astounding 82% of them were re-arrested at least once during that period. This is unacceptably high and seriously jeopardizes public safety. It can trap those seeking redemption in a cycle of crime and poverty. Successful reentry programs are rare, but they do exist and ought to be replicated to see how wide their ability to reduce subsequent arrests and incarcerations can go."



Buzz Brockway,  
Vice President  
of Policy

### EXPANDED SCHOOL CHOICE CAN HELP PANDEMIC LEARNING LOSSES

"Supporting parents and educational options is the right way to address learning loss. Merely empowering the same individuals that created the new hurdles Georgians face is a losing strategy for all those kids that put so much of their trust in us."



Josh Crawford,  
Director of Criminal  
Justice Initiatives

### LABOR PARTICIPATION RATE REMAINS ABYSMAL, BUT FORMER INMATES PROVIDE SOLUTIONS

"With more Georgians and Americans opting out of full-time work, former inmates can provide an economic boost for our state—and the country overall. More importantly, though, is the commitment to help make broken men and families whole again. Former inmates are not merely throwaways and have served their debt to society required by the law."



Josh Crawford,  
Director of Criminal  
Justice Initiatives

### WE MUST REIN IN VIOLENT CRIME TO HELP THOSE WHO NEED ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

"Americans are more worried about crime than they have been in decades...This fear is driving businesses large and small out of cities and neighborhoods with rising crime rates. By abandoning these high-risk locations, these businesses take with them any job opportunities they provide to poorer residents. Local and state governments must focus on reducing violent crime, not just as necessary to protect human life but also because doing so is a prerequisite to real economic opportunity in poor communities."



Erik Randolph,  
Director of  
Research, and  
Vance Ginn, Chief  
Economist at the  
Texas Public Policy  
Foundation

### LOCKDOWNS WERE A FAILURE. WHAT WE DO NEXT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE.

"Protecting the rights and opportunities of workers to earn a living is obvious. Equally important are the psychological benefits that come with the dignity of work. And there are socio-economic benefits from work that positively impact everyone, such as building social capital and gaining skills, which are especially important for those in marginalized communities who were most impacted by the shutdowns."

# NATIONAL RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

As our message and solutions for opportunity spread in Georgia and beyond, influential national organizations are taking note. The GCO team received several honors and recognitions in 2022 as a result of our growing success.



## **RANDY HICKS RECEIVES NATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD**

GCO President and CEO Randy Hicks was named 2022 winner of State Policy Network's Thomas A. Roe Award. State Policy Network (SPN) is a national organization that supports and connects state-based organizations working to strengthen American freedom and opportunity. The Thomas A. Roe Award is named after SPN's founder, who spent much of his life encouraging states to grow organizations like the Georgia Center for Opportunity. SPN bestows this honor annually to a single leader whose innovation, conviction, and courage have advanced free-market solutions and changed lives. The award perfectly embodies the passion and purpose that have defined Randy's vision and leadership, and both Randy and GCO were honored to be selected as the 2022 recipient.



## **GCO TEAM RECEIVES NATIONAL POLICY AWARD FOR INFLUENTIAL RESEARCH**

State Policy Network also recognized GCO for the impact of our policy research work in 2022. Our team received SPN's Bob Williams Award for Outstanding Policy Achievement for our policy study highlighting the effect of pandemic restrictions on local economic and employment opportunities.

Our research was one of the leading studies to reveal that pandemic job loss in a given state was directly associated with how severely that state shut down its economy. The study also showed that these shutdowns were most hurtful to low-income and poor Americans. GCO has used these findings to work several state legislators on model legislation that would prepare Georgia and other states to respond to future health crises more appropriately.



## **GCO INCLUDED ON ATLAS NETWORK'S "TOP 10 TO WATCH IN 2022"**

Atlas Network, a national organization that works to empower prosperity globally, highlighted Georgia Center for Opportunity as one of their top ten nonprofit partners to follow in 2022. Atlas Network described GCO as an organization focused on "[making] the world a better place for countless people everyday," and especially highlighted GCO's focus on bringing Education Scholarship Accounts (ESAs) to Georgia.

# LEADERSHIP AND STAFF



**DAVID BASS**

Press Manager



**KRISTIN BARKER**

Director of Better  
Work Columbus



**LUISA BEECO**

Program Manager,  
Better Work Gwinnett



**BUZZ BROCKWAY**

Vice President of Policy



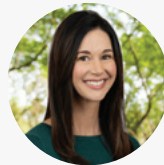
**JACE BROOKS**

Director of Better  
Work Gwinnett



**COREY BURRES**

Vice President of  
Communications



**KIMBERLY CHALEK**

Vice President of  
External Affairs



**ERIC COCHLING**

Chief Program Officer  
and General Counsel



**JOSH CRAWFORD**

Director of Criminal  
Justice Initiatives



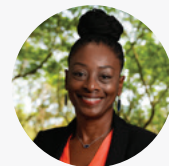
**JIM ECKSTEIN**

Executive Vice  
President



**AMBER GORMAN**

Program Specialist,  
Better Work Columbus



**KATHERINE GREENE**

Family Program  
Manager





**RACHEL HAMILTON**

Grants Associate



**RANDY HICKS**

President and CEO



**KOPPANY JORDAN**

Development Associate



**JAMIE LORD**

Director of Government  
Affairs



**JOYCE MAYBERRY**

Vice President of  
Family



**KELLY MCGONICAL**

Director of  
Institutional Giving



**REBECCA PRIMIS**

Director of Content Marketing



**ERIK RANDOLPH**

Director of Research



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