



Press Release: Embargoed until July 21, 2020

Media Contact: Wallace Louie, Director of Communications, wallace@oaklandpromise.org, 510.903.9714 (m)

Oakland Promise Partners with Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) to Provide Oakland COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Efforts through an Initial \$2 Million Investment from The Audacious Project

Oakland Promise is the only leading anchor institution in the western U.S. among 5 other organizations who are working with HCZ in partner cities to address Black communities' most critical needs and support COVID-19 recovery.

Oakland, CA July 21, 2020 --- Today, [Harlem Children's Zone \(HCZ\) announced](#) the raising of \$26 million toward national COVID-19 Relief and Recovery efforts as a 2020 Audacious Project Grantee and with Oakland Promise receiving \$2 million as one of its five collaborating anchor institutions. This amount will be applied toward the goal of raising an additional \$2 million to support these COVID-19 relief efforts. Together, Oakland Promise (OP) is well positioned to support the Black community during COVID-19 through this grant. Since March, OP sought to provide relief for those affected by the pandemic through raising and providing emergency relief funds for students and their families who were displaced or lost income, helping students finish out school by providing technology devices, ensuring their scholarships remained intact and providing logistical and emotional support. Through this grant, OP is being recognized as a contributing difference-maker in the Black community in Oakland.

As the COVID-19 pandemic hit, it became clear that it was disproportionately affecting Black families in Oakland and elsewhere. *"Oakland Promise understands the importance of comprehensive supports, particularly across the cradle to career pipeline for our young people. COVID-19 is a multi-dimensional threat that requires a comprehensive response, and CEO Mia Bonta and her team are well positioned to execute on our national plan, driving vital resources to the most impacted communities in Oakland."*, said Kwame Owusu-Kesse, CEO of Harlem Children's Zone. This timely partnership and investment coming from HCZ will help fuel Oakland Promise's investment in Oakland's Black community to minimize the detrimental educational and citywide impact of COVID-19.

Among five critical areas that HCZ and its partners are focused on, Oakland Promise is well poised to help specifically in three areas aligned with its mission: a) protecting the most vulnerable, b) bridging the digital divide and c) preventing learning loss. These are three areas OP has already been working on. Adds Ms. Bonta, *"We are extremely honored to be an anchor institution working with HCZ and The Audacious Project in this endeavor to support our Black community in Oakland. With OUSD, #OaklandUndivided, Oakland NAACP Education Committee and all of our other partners, we have already supported Oakland children, students and families during this pandemic to provide services virtually, financially, technologically, educationally and emotionally. This investment will enable OP to do so much more in breadth and depth for the Black community that will bring more educational opportunity, equity, justice and economic mobility in the years ahead."*

Since 2016, Oakland Promise has been working toward advancing Oakland's community by supporting the city's young people to achieve their postsecondary educational dreams. With equity as a focus, OP has striven to support young people of color through cradle to career programs ranging from college savings accounts, college scholarships, financial guidance and advisory/mentorship opportunities. To date, OP has provided assistance to over 32,000 young people.

With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting in March however, Oakland's education system was rocked and it deeply impacted all students and families, [especially the Black communities across the country](#). With the recent demands for racial and social justice after the George Floyd and Breanna Taylor killings, it revealed an even more compelling need to mitigate the impact of systemic racism on the Black community. *"With this partnership and investment, Oakland Promise will be able to reach and serve more of our brilliant young people in the Oakland community"* said Dr. Michael McAfee, Chairperson of the Board of Directors at Oakland Promise.

Last week, Oakland Promise reaffirmed its [strong commitment to Oakland's Black community](#) and racial justice in a CEO letter from Ms. Bonta. In the letter, she highlighted the need for empathy that leads to action and several steps OP was taking to support the Black community and the calls for racial justice including: An Oakland Promise Youth Community Organizer Grant, youth-led series of virtual town Halls, key participation by Oakland political leaders and leading advocacy organizations, amplification of Black voice and experience, and provision of resources for parents in talking about race to their children. As an organization that is led by, and where the majority of staff are BIPOC, funding catalyzed through The Audacious Project, is all the more meaningful. Now, with this partnership with HCZ, Oakland Promise will be part of a collective that can explore more innovative ways to alleviate the pandemic's negative impact on the Black community nationwide.

###

About Oakland Promise:

In 2016, Oaklanders came together to make a promise to every child in our city, especially from Black and Brown families, offering them the resources, support, coaching, and incentives they need from birth and throughout their school years to empower them to seek out and thrive in the higher education and career of their choosing. Oakland Promise operates with direct action, as an intermediary partner and policy influencer. With equity as a focus, Oakland Promise works to give young people and their families, especially those of color, the opportunity to make this promise a reality through scholarships, college savings accounts (529s), financial coaching and resources, advising and mentorship. Since inception, Oakland Promise recipients have opened over 650 college savings accounts; over 20,000 have received early college scholarships; over 10,000 have received targeted college and career readiness supports and over 1,800 have received scholarships and persistence support.

Learn more at OaklandPromise.org

About Harlem Children's Zone

Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty with on-the-ground, all-around programming that builds up opportunities for children and families to thrive in school, work and life. From early childhood, education and career programs to community outreach and wellness initiatives, HCZ opens possibilities for more people, in more places. Guided by a generation of evidence, HCZ is rooting out poverty on every front across the nation and around the world. In Central Harlem, HCZ's reach spans 100 blocks, with high-quality programs at more than 30 sites throughout the neighborhood. Through the HCZ Practitioners Institute, more than 500 United States-based community delegations and 186 international delegations — including public officials, educators and nonprofit leaders — have visited to learn about HCZ's comprehensive cradle-to-career solutions. And

now, together with national partners and local collaborators, the William Julius Wilson Institute at HCZ will serve as the leading authority on and resource for place-based, people-focused strategies, support services and tools that open pathways to social and economic mobility in communities across America. Learn more at [HCZ.org](https://www.hcz.org).

About The Audacious Project

Launched in April 2018, The Audacious Project is a collaborative funding initiative that's catalyzing social impact on a grand scale. Housed at TED, the nonprofit devoted to ideas worth spreading, and with support from leading social impact advisor The Bridgespan Group, The Audacious Project convenes funders and social entrepreneurs with the goal of supporting bold solutions to the world's most urgent challenges. The Audacious Project's funding collective is made up of respected organizations and individuals in philanthropy, including the Skoll Foundation, Virgin Unite, The Valhalla Charitable Foundation, ELMA Philanthropies, and more.

The Audacious model was created to be a catalyst for social impact at a grand scale. Key to the mission is being able to pivot rapidly to support where the need is greatest in the moment. In line with that purpose, Audacious is directing funds towards several COVID-19 related solutions tailored to immediate response and recovery. The Audacious Project is proud to support Fast Grants, GiftDirectly, Harlem Children's Zone, Partners in Health, Project Echo, and World Central Kitchen. Learn more at [AudaciousProject.org](https://www.audaciousproject.org).

TED TALK LINK <https://go.ted.com/kwameowusukesse>

NOTE LIVE at 8:00AM PST 7/21/20